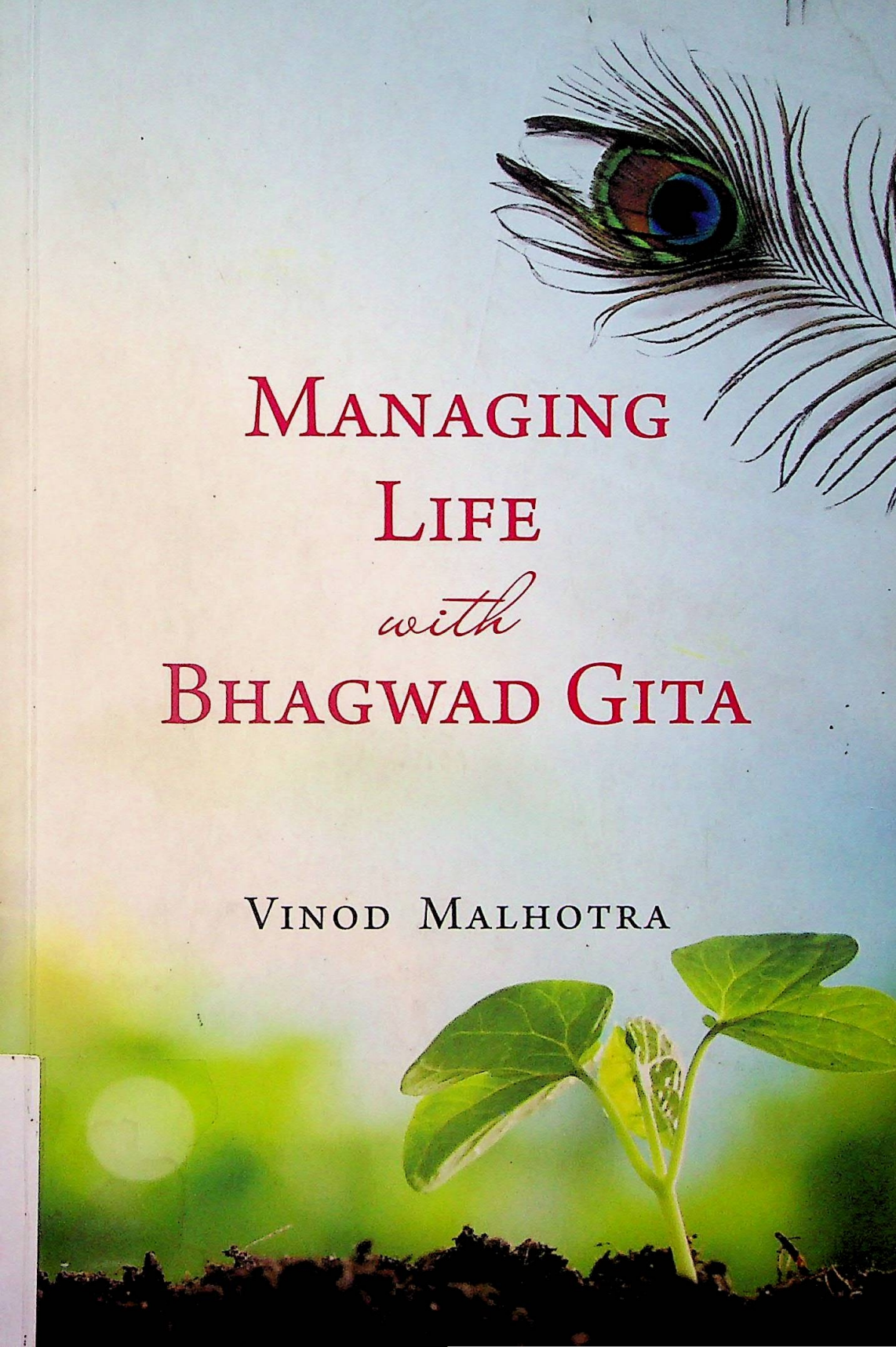

Managing Life *with* Bhagwad Gita

Vinod Malhotra

MANAGING LIFE
WITH
BHAGWADGITA

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THIRD EYE

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PREFACE

Human body is the most valuable creation of Nature. It is technologically perfect and aesthetically beautiful. There is an enormous lot of activity that is constantly going on inside and all of us are blissfully unaware of it. All human organs are intelligently programmed and each of these functions in accordance with the role that has been pre-assigned. Each of these organs has been provided with the appropriate material to perform the desired task.

Every life has to be lived and for that to happen, it has to seek dependence on external factors and resources that nature has created and made available to the entire humanity in abundance. It is the manner in which we use these resources, in quantitative as well as qualitative terms that determines our state of well-being, longevity and our mental health.

Human beings need to strike a complete balance and harmony with the outside nature and natural elements. This alone will create peace and harmony inside, apart from ensuring good health. This is how yogis live their lives and this is the path we need to follow for a complete and a highly productive life.

Human endowment is divided into two distinct parts-gross and subtle. Each of them requires differential treatment

and management. Our subtle entities such as intellect, mind, vision drive the functions of the gross and are more powerful, and hence need our closer attention and care.

However it is the holistic nurturing of the body and intellect that will help us in achieving an ideal state of lifestyle.

The objective of the book is to create a right perspective with several options that will ensure an enduring state of happiness and peace.

Bhagwadgita, variously described as the voice of God, celestial song or song divine was delivered by a Karamyogi, and one of the greatest thought leaders of his time in the battle field of Mahabharata. Life is a veritable battle field and human being's different attributes are really analogues to the chariot that was commandeered by Krishna leading to the victory of Pandavas over Kauravas, a symbolic victory of good over evil. To amplify, the chariot is the human body, horses are the senses that have a tendency to drift until they are reined in by Krishna who represents the intellect and super consciousness, Arjun, though a great warrior is the mind that keeps wandering and is perpetually vacillating till it is soothed by the wisdom of the Krishna's counsel.

Mahabharata is a story of epic proportions and Bhagwadgita, a prelude to that story delivered in the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjun is a treatise on profound human values, one's Dharma towards family, society and the universe in a holistic manner.

The inspiration for this work and indeed, the content is wholly inspired by Bhagwadgita.

Vinod Malhotra

Chapter One

A Day in One's Life

All living beings have evolved overtime, undergoing several changes in their adaptive capabilities. The basic structure of all living beings has, by and large remained the same and whatever changes that have taken place, have been more as a response to the external environment than any fundamental changes in the anatomy, both physiologically as well as psychologically.

The entire living organism which includes the animal kingdom on earth, air and water have apparently adjusted to the external environment quite beautifully, but different habits governed by their innate nature has created a diverse lifestyle leading to a skewed pattern of growth and problems peculiar to each living specimen. While those belonging to the animal world have quickly adjusted creating a predictable life style, their counterparts in the human species have been less efficient, and hence less predictable. The unpredictable behaviour in case of human beings is a product, less on account of their gross components and more owing to their subtle attributes. All human bodies, the world over have behaved more or less in the same manner because of their similar needs, but their lifestyle has shown marked variations on account of their varying

sense-mind-intellect combinations and the eco-system that exists around them.

Physiologically, two humans are almost identical barring their gender or the colour of their skin, and beneath that they are similar with similar body demands and identical methods of procreation that keeps the entire human race going. *However, the way two human beings treat their bodies is strikingly different from each other, primarily because two human beings are different in their attitude, intellectual endowments and their intrinsic nature.* Blame it on their genes or upbringing as the evolutionary scientist will have you believe, there is more to it than what meets the eye, and this is essentially an attempt to look deeply at the causes and indeed, the ideal way to redeem the situation. Any such endeavour by sheer nature and size of the task will be couched in a general language, and every individual shall have to pick what suits him best.

Life style management is really a simple exercise. Every life has to be lived and there are various ways of living it. There has to be the best way to lead one's life out of various available options. *Best usually, falls within the ambit of the simplest, but is often considered too simple to be adopted by the growing aspirations of people inhabiting this world.* Developments in science and technology and improved devices and gadgetry have only added to our aspirational appetite. Managing one's life in that 'best' manner is the objective of all human beings. That 'best' may be different in each case, depending upon the perception of each individual, but the bottom line is that each person must feel and look healthy, wear a cheerful disposition and be an asset to the society. Any prescribed life style management must contain, either severely or jointly, the material and spiritual components.

Human beings comprise the subtle and gross. The gross elements in all humans would mean the body and all physical parts, individually visible and identified. There are some body parts that are outwardly visible like the nose, ears, eyes, tongue and the skin. There are others that are encased inside and can only be seen through the eyes of a surgeon. All that is gross is visible, and is perishable with a 'best before' tag.

The subtle though, normally an attribute of the specific body part, is perceptive in nature and is found in variable measures in different human beings. No living being is complete without the subtle that plays a pivotal role in making a person that he is, including exercising a dominant influence on the life style that he leads. Usually, it is the subtle that plays a decisive role and drives the gross in acquiring the best lifestyle.

Any life style management must necessarily look at both these entities and their respective functions to qualify as a worthwhile guide. We will first discuss the gross aspects of our daily routine and simultaneously talk about the best possible practices that can be followed within the time-space constraints.

For the purposes of our discussion on the best lifestyle management practices, we shall confine ourselves to an ordinary human being, following a standard way of life. Everybody can relate to him, and make whatever minor adjustments he may wish to, if his or her lifestyle is markedly different from it, or if he has the additional resources and aspirations to go on to the next level. The suggested style could be the benchmark for reference purposes.

Let us list out the normal steps or activities that each one of us performs, during the course of a day.

1. For most of us, a day typically starts between 6-8 am in the morning.
2. Some of us rush to the washroom and others to a table for our morning cup of tea or some other form of fluid intake. There is a small percentage that prefers to go for a morning walk before imbibing the tea.
3. Having completed the process of our morning ablutions, we are more or less ready for the day. While every other function that we have performed seems similar, our state of readiness is dependent upon the extent of the detoxification of our body. This is related to the manner in which we have spent our previous day or two, and our indulgence with food and fluid.
4. We hasten to break our fast with what has been prepared and in proportion to our body needs in the morning hours. The contents of our morning repast witness several variations, depending upon the time available to us, the state of our detoxified body and our belief or habit for a heavy or a light breakfast.
5. We rush to work in the available mode of transport and reach the familiar and comfortable environs of our office or any other place of work. If on a day prior to this, some meetings have been scheduled, we go there straight and land up in office thereafter.
6. Our office or our work place is our home for the next eight to nine hours and this is where we spend our maximum time in a state of greatest alertness. This is also supposed to be our most productive period, providing to us our life supporting resources,

and the means to care for our lifestyle and that of our family and other dependents.

7. Our workplace and the time we spend there, is meant primarily to perform our assigned duties with absolute commitment, but this is followed more in breach than in observance. Few of us leave our workplace, completing the job that we had planned for the day, and the majority tends to leave it for another day which is usually tomorrow. *We carry a modicum of tension when we return home. Residual work left everyday has the tendency to pile upon our unfinished work and cause consequent tensions.*
8. We come back home either with some unfinished office work, or with piled up tensions relating to work, effectively eating into the time that we must set apart as a responsible householder for our family, spouse and children. This is a cause of avoidable strife at home, which is ideally a safe haven for peace and relaxation. We fail to realize that people at home have had an equally difficult time with many unfinished tasks, and are looking forward to togetherness which is the biggest casualty of our casual behaviour.
9. Evenings at home can be pretty long or miserably short depending upon the speed at which we finish our tasks and return home. The urge to come back home would depend upon the time we spend with the family and the value attached to it, which again would depend upon our experience and the history of family accords and discords.
10. Evenings on a weekday and weekends would be different on account of the perception of the next day and are accordingly utilized either in an early

retirement for the night or for a social outing with or without children.

11. We all look forward to the night, both for much needed rest as well as a temporary reprieve from life's pressures and consequent tensions, in the absence of which our mind and intellect can go haywire, leading to an early neurological disorder.
12. Good and sound night sleep is mandatory and is essential for complete body rejuvenation and prepares us for another day.

Interestingly, all days are, more or less a repetition of the day gone by. Perhaps, on some days we may do certain different things, but the manner in which we do them would not be different from the way we did them yesterday or the day before. In the earlier years of our life we are working towards achieving an ambition relating to our station in life, but our daily routine would not appear very different from what has been described above. Our energy levels are much greater and so is the desire to achieve greater wealth and recognition. In the latter part of our existence in this planet, we are burdened with lesser responsibilities and have more time to discharge them, but the energy levels to perform them are proportionately low. Our daily occupations at this stage also do not look markedly different. Subtle variations will inevitably take place as the time passes by, but our inherent nature that has an important bearing on our lifestyle would not change drastically.

Chapter Two

KNOW THYSELF

Before venturing into the sacred space of lifestyle management and suggesting the ideal prescription for it, it would be necessary to understand *who and what we are.* While in the field of medical prescriptions, there are customized treatments in certain branches of medicine like Ayurveda system and homeopathy that prescribe a constitutional remedy, lifestyle management shall have to be more comprehensive that looks at person's habits, attitude and all the sub-conscious traits one has acquired overtime, especially in the formative years of our existence and seeks alignment with nature, internal and external. In certain respects, it is based upon the principles of yoga and addresses both the physical and intellectual aspects of our existence.

Let us try and understand what we are, and that will inevitably mean looking at *our body, mind, senses, intellect and our ego.* We may add an entity known as the soul and the picture of our self becomes complete. It may be observed that out of six distinct entities described above, the gross part is only one and the remaining five are within the province of the subtle. This is an important aspect of our existence on this planet and most of us ignore it at our

own peril. We remain so obsessively engrossed with our body and its needs that all other entities receive little or no attention. We largely treat ourselves as 'the body' and tend to get obsessively body-centric. We actually end up managing only one sixth of our life's assets resulting in incomplete living. In absence of required attention to subtle entities, our body which is closely linked and indeed, dependant on the remaining five, also gets inadequate attention.

Ancient and enlightened societies that were more evolved, saw this truth early on, and consistently placed more emphasis on the subtle (read spiritual) aspect of their existence. However, the advancements in the field of science and technology that primarily touched the gross part of our existence, the body, have blurred somewhat this reality and we are now furiously engaged in seeking body comforts. The required food for mind, intellect and soul that would fall within the region of kindness, positive emotions and other finer values has become the biggest casualties. We are out to outdo one another by focusing on the body beautiful, and the beauty of mind and intellect gets last priority.

In the geographical context and as a broad formulation, while the West has looked closely at the outside and most of their research work relates to the phenomena occurring in the realm of the gross, East and eastern thought has placed greater emphasis on the inside and has dealt more with the subtle aspects of human existence. Understandably, West has reached the commanding heights of scientific and technological progress and the East is trying to slowly cover the ground on material space. Sadly however, the eastern nations have not fully exploited their strengths

from the reservoirs of their ancient knowledge that has so much to offer in diverse fields of human interaction.

Adequate attention is indeed required, on keeping the body healthy and pure, but much more is needed on the subtle components of our system in order to maximize life's enjoyment and happiness. A mere cosmetic improvement in the external covering, and indeed the gross inside of our body, will not by itself ensure lasting peace and bliss. *A balanced lifestyle management will involve, equal and perhaps, proportionate attention to the physical and the spiritual parts of our being.*

Bhagwadgita describes the relationships of these six entities present in our body and their order of precedence in the following taken from chapter 3, verse 42:

Indriyani Pranayaho
Indriyebhye Param Mana
Mansastu Para Budhi
Yo Budhe Partastu Sa

"Senses are superior to body, mind is the next level and our intellect is superior to mind. Beyond the intellect is the soul which is imperishable."

Human body is an organic entity and is essentially composed of what is traditionally described as "Panchbhoot". It does possess several inorganic elements in different proportions that are conditioned by our size, its proportion to the universe and the specific region that we live in. Primarily, it is raised from the environment with the help of five components that are, earth, fire, water, air and ether. Each of these five components, perform functions that are both complimentary as well as opposite to each other, depending upon the functional need. For instance, earth and water are required to maintain adequate

liquidity levels in the body and prevent any dehydration. Water helps to douse extra heat or fire that may be caused by assimilation of substance that creates more heat than is sustainable in the system. The component of earth in our body with its characteristics of perforation releases the extra and unclean water, through sweat and seeks to maintain healthy levels.

Any life style management shall have to closely look at the proportionate compositions of these five elements which have been pre-determined and fixed keeping in view our body structure, its needs and the environment we live in. For instance, the composition of fire in our body which determines the body temperature must be that much, and of a nature which helps to maintain it at 98.4 F. This is well within the tolerance levels in respect to the average mean temperature that is found in different location across the globe, barring few places of extreme weather conditions. Any variation in the body's heat content or fire will spell trouble and gradually eat into the healthy organs of the body, all of which can remain healthy only in a pre-defined state of its tolerance limits.

Our body is in a constant state of movement and is required to perform several tasks, both for its maintenance in a healthy state as well as for performance of essential karmas. In order to do that for the entire length of life that we lead, it requires energy. In fact, energy is at the root of all that we are, and all that we do. It would be relevant to postulate the relationship of energy with our being. This will only be a passing reference at this stage, and we shall deal with the subject in greater detail later.

Once born, we have to keep performing karmas unceasingly. We will define karmas in a comprehensive

manner to include thought, speech and action. Our karmas create both exothermic as well as endothermic effect, as defined in the principles of thermodynamics. In other words, in order to perform karmas, we consume energy and having performed them, we generate energy. This ensures that the sum total of energy at any given point in time remains the same and this is in conformity with the time-tested concept of the indestructibility of energy in the universe. Any other position is completely untenable.

The quantum of energy required however, is variable and is a subject of our age, condition of our body, our vocation in life and other optional activities each one of us is engaged in, over and above the essential ones. We shall have to properly manage and in fact, optimize the amount of energy we require at different stages of our existence. It will of course, vary from person to person and shall be quantitatively different at different stages of our life. We shall have to learn to optimize it by personal experience and observation. Energy, both in excess or deficit will be a cause of problems and we shall have to seek its balance.

As a normal practice, we draw the required energy from outside, external sources and from the environment. *This is how the importance of air, water and food comes in as the main provider of the required energy. Our prescription for lifestyle management will have to deal with these three elements in an exhaustive manner.*

All living beings including the human beings are designed in such a way that they have to remain constantly occupied in work. There is no escape from it for anyone. Lack of work can even mean instant death. Breathing, a fundamental requirement to survive is also 'work', and

that can not be stopped. You cannot take even a momentary break from it, leave alone suspending it for a short while. Beyond a while, absence of water and food will also result in death. In order to imbibe them, work is essential. The most heightened instinct in a human being relates to his survival, and these two factors combined together make sure that we keep ourselves engaged in work unceasingly.

We are thus constantly in need of energy and keep seeking it from a variety of sources that have to be outside of us.

The mandatory nature of work has been spelt out in the Bhagwadgita in unequivocal terms in chapter 3, at verse 5 and 8 as follows:

Na Hi Kaschit Khshanapi
Jatu Tishtati Akarmkrit
Karyate Hyvsha Karma
Sarva Prakritijai Gunai

"No human being can stay without work anywhere even for a moment. The entire mankind is compelled by the qualities created under the influence of nature to perform".

Niyatam Kuru Karam Tvam
Karam Jyayo Hi Karmana
Sharir Yatrapi Cha Te Na
Prasidyet Akarmana

"It is much better to work than not, because if you do not work you will not be able to survive and complete your life's journey.

The importance of work is further emphasized when Krishna tells Arjuna that even He, the God incarnate has to keep working unceasingly. This is what he says in verse 22 of the same chapter:

Na Me Parthasti Kartavyam
Trishu Lokeshu Kinchan
Nanvaptam Avaptyavam
Vart Aiv Cha Karmani

"I have no duties in this universe and there is nothing that I cannot acquire. Even then, I work unceasingly".

The need for work, its quality, manner of its discharge and the quantum of work therefore, must occupy centre stage to any meaningful description of lifestyle management. The objectives of an ideal lifestyle management would be following:

1. We should lead a perfectly healthy life and remain as healthy as possible.
2. We should be able to perform our assigned duties with élan and commitment.
3. Our mind and intellect must remain free of worries to the extent possible.
4. In addition to the performance of our duties and responsibilities, we should be in a position to do our bit for the society, nation and environment.
5. Our position in this universe vis-à-vis other living beings is superior in the hierarchy. This must mean that we must live a life that is different from, and superior to other creations of nature. Each one of us therefore, must find a suitable calling in conformity with our nature and capacity, and seek excellence in that field. That will ensure a feeling of having lived one's life fully.
6. Being happy and staying in that state should be the common denominator of our existence.
7. Our lifestyle should assist us in raising the bar of our performance and this should be a lifelong effort.

8. Our chosen lifestyle must also create opportunities for us to constantly seek enrichment not merely in monetary terms alone, but much more so in the spiritual space. This does not mean performing religious activities, but relates more to interests in spiritual science, fine arts, music, poetry, writing and other interests each one of us must cultivate as a great support system, in times of stress and distress that all of us must inevitably go through at some stage of our life. These interests may for some, become a lifelong occupation. Spiritual inclination in short, will help us find our meaning in life.
9. The preferred lifestyle management must inevitably take us closer to our avowed goal. Our lifestyle should necessarily help us in achieving whatever aims and objectives that we have set for ourselves, and in that sense it should be progressive in nature. To elaborate, self-restrictive factors like superstitions, prejudices, irrational thoughts and other regressive behaviour must be cast aside.
10. We must aim and strive to live a life that is meaningful and leave a legacy. Even ordinary tasks performed with commitment and excellence become exemplary.
11. Two pillars should verily guide us in our journey of life. These are: "Gyan" and "Vigyan". The principles of Science (Vigyan) should be observed and Knowledge (Gyan) should guide in doing so. For example, ignorance of gravitational force would be suicidal.

The list of objectives enumerated above is only illustrative and certain individuals may, in addition to these, choose

objectives that are unique to them. For instance, some people who have largely renounced their worldly desires except, those that are just sufficient to keep their body and soul together, would aspire for peace and contentment. They would prefer to spend much of their time in spiritual pursuits. Their lifestyle would be marked with utter simplicity and in performance of least number of karmas that are unpretentious and unostentatious.

We had looked earlier at the gross and subtle aspects of our existence corresponding to the gross and subtle components of our being.

We will first examine the gross which will focus primarily on the physiological part that is temporary in nature and is perishable. To counter its perishable nature, we are armed with strong survival instincts and availability of energy that is supplied to us by air, water and food present in the environment. The quality, quantity and the manner in which we make use of these endowments will have a strong bearing on the length and the quality of our gross existence. We will examine each of them severally and jointly.

Chapter Three

AIR, WATER AND FOOD

Air or our Breathing

Amongst the basic requirements of our existence in the world, breathing must occupy the most important position. Nobody can stay alive for a little over a minute without oxygen extracted out of air, and this is accomplished by the process of breathing. It is our breathing, indeed, our capacity to breathe that keeps us alive. As soon as that is gone, so are we and no power in the world, can bring us back to life. The entire living organism is blessed with the ability to breathe in ample measure, and nature has provided three (two nasal passages and the mouth) out of nine openings in our body, for its regular and constant assimilation. The process of breathing has been made so easy and facile that all of us do it in an automation mode. In fact, we take it for granted and hence ignore its function and process completely.

And that indeed is the beginning of most of our problems. Of all the processes that impact our living, expiration and inspiration are the simplest requiring little, or no effort on our part. It therefore operates as a multiple paradox. It is essential, therefore made easy, and since it is easy

we pay little or no attention to it. Common prudence would suggest that an activity that is fundamental to our existence, must engage our attention with respect to quality, quantity, regularity and its complete methodology. The process of breathing is not just drawing in air/oxygen and throwing out foul air/carbon-dioxide, it is a veritable source of energy, *prana vayu* that is also required to convert the food we imbibe, into the required energy to enable us perform all necessary functions. Oxygen imbibed through the process of breathing oxygenates our blood and its constant circulation becomes our main life-support system keeping all our vital organs in a healthy and working state. Any impurity in the air and the oxygen that we inhale and incorrect method of breathing, will obviously, infect our body and several parts that need constant dose of oxygen to perform their functions.

In brief, the need for concentration on our breath, or at least its awareness and its quality, cannot be overemphasized.

For most of us engaged in our work during major part of our awakened state, it may not be possible to remain focused on our breath and the pattern of its ingress and egress. That is why a few important steps are being suggested that will not require much time and can be made an integral part of our daily routine. These would be as follows:

We will start with the word OM, the most primordial sound of this universe.

1. Importance of OM

represents the Supreme energy, it is OM. It would be interesting to look at how Krishna describes OM in the following two verses taken from chapter 7, verse 8 and chapter 8, verse 13:

Rasoham Apsu Kaunteya
Prabhasmi Shashi Suryayo
Pranva Sarva Vedeshu
Shabd Khe Paurusham Nara *Ch. 7, V. 8*

"I am the essence and taste in the water and I am the illumination in the sun and moon. I am OM in all Vedas and the sound in the sky emanates from me and I represent the manhood of all living human race.

Om Iti Akakshram Brahma
Vyaharan Mam Anusmaran
Ya Prayati Tyajan Deham
Sa Yati Parmam Gatim *Ch. 8, V. 13*

"Those who recite OM regularly which really is the representation of Brahm and fix their mind and concentration on me, verily attain me on leaving their astral body".

While the word OM belongs to Devanagri script and we must use the vowels and consonants of that script to describe its unique characteristics. We will take recourse to the Roman script for the sake of convenience. The word AUM comprises two vowels and one consonant, which are: A, U and M. A is the first vowel of Devanagri script and M is the last consonant. In order to pronounce A, we have to open our mouth. M can be spoken only by keeping our mouth shut. The vowel U emerges straight out of our vocal chords and from the rear part of the mouth,

and is accompanied by a wave of air and energy. Every sound that we make is energy and needs energy for a proper throw. Every sound that we make in this universe must necessarily have these phenomena to support this mechanism.

Recite OM with a deep breath 4-5 times before leaving the bed. It will create vibrations in your body that will generate an invigorating feel. If you cannot do it anytime in the morning, do it whenever you have the time. It will not require more than five minutes of your time.

2. Get up from the bed slowly like a child-it is a new day, it is a new birth. Do not ever jump out of the bed. You might hurt yourself someday. When we wake up in the morning after long hours of rest, our body condition is no different from that of a new born child, and we need to take a few initial steps with adequate caution.
3. Day before when you go to bed, it is like the end of a life, like death.
4. The night you spent may be disturbed, dreamful or deep sleep.
5. Your breath may have been uneven, that means inadequate flow of oxygen. Do not feel fresh. Take deep breath 10 times before leaving the bed.
6. May have imbibed inadequate water and if your throat feels dry, drink a glass of water.
7. Two things essential for a good healthy life and a day full of energy are air and water. Food creates the supplementary effect.
8. On the breathing pattern, check the flow and indeed the relative throw of your breathing from both your

nostrils. Most likely it would be unequal. This indicates some unevenness in your body. Perform what is described as Alom-Vilom about 5 times. This will bring in some harmony and make you feel better.

9. Breathing which is our lifeline and provides the basic energy is the most neglected activity, because it is available to us in the easiest of forms.
10. You must concentrate on your breathing for as much time that you can during the day. This will ensure, (a) quality breathing, (b) regular breathing, (c) improve your concentration levels on you job, (d) Improve your work output, (e) keep you in a Dhyan mode.
11. Habitual focus on your breathing will improve your vision both physically and metaphorically.
12. During the day, be careful of the air you breathe. Consciously avoid foul air, polluted air and to the extent possible avoid spending time in a crowded place. There is enough oxygen in the atmosphere and you need not share it with others at one place.
13. Avoid staying in one place or a room for long hours. Open the windows once in a while or take a walk after a few hours of sitting at one place. Do it consciously, and not out of compulsion.
14. It is important to lead a very healthy life and indeed, extend the longevity by attending to your breathing needs.
15. Your stay in this world is not determined by the number of years on the calendar, but by the number of breaths that are allocated to you by nature or the creator. This number is fixed and is not subject to any change. Each one of us has a specific respiratory credit balance, and every breath we take is debited to our account. While the numbers of breaths are

fixed, there is no regulation on the time taken to complete them. In other words, if you breathe slowly and deeply, and take longer in completing your breaths, you effectively extend your life span. On an average, most of us take about 15-16 breaths (including inspiration and expiration) during the course of one minute. Bring them down to 10 per minute and you have increased your age by 50 per cent. This is simple arithmetic.

16. This is how Yogis seek to become ageless.
17. Conversely, if you take 20-25 breaths in a minute, you would bring down your age proportionately. Those with angry disposition take short breaths and have a shorter and a tense life.
18. Since most of us breathe in an automation mode, it will be difficult for us to start breathing in a slow manner. It is therefore advisable to set apart two to three minutes each, on two to three occasions during the day to practice slow breathing. This practice will gradually guide our unconscious breathing pattern and get us into a rhythm of slow and deep breathing. By this improved methodology we shall inhale larger quantity of oxygen and will be in a position to detoxify our system by throwing out gaseous toxins.

Breathing, during the Sleep State

One of the most fascinating aspects of our existence relates to the period when we are resting in sleep. Unfortunately we do not factor this phase into our lifestyle because this phase is largely uneventful. Once asleep, everything comes to a standstill. Metaphorically speaking, we are lost to the world, or the correct way to describe would be that the outside world ceases to exist in our consciousness,

albeit temporarily. As soon as we wake up it comes back, or is regained by our consciousness. The world was always there, it never vanished. It only receded from our consciousness on account of disconnect caused by our body's need for sleep and rest. It would also be interesting to note that this disconnect is caused by a temporary cessation of the functioning of our senses, which like many other parts of our body take a temporary sabbatical. During the sleep state, the link between our senses and their respective cognitive centers inside the brain is very tenuous. That is why our vision and ability to hear, is a little blurred during this state. As soon as the senses come alive, the link is reestablished and they seek a full back up of the brain power and signals, and manage to restore normalcy in their functioning.

Most interestingly, our brain keeps functioning all this while. So does our heart. Contrary to our perception, our brain never sleeps and its normal activity occasioned by the movement of neurons and secretion of hormones carries on. *In real sense it cannot afford to, because this perhaps is the only faculty that keeps guard on all the likely threats that make us vulnerable during our sleep state. These threats are both internal and external, and nature has devised variegated means in different living beings, to counter them and its control lies within the brain.*

1. The external threat.

   External threat, if any during our sleep state is now more in the province of fiction than fact. It is part of the folklore dating back to the period when our ancestors did not have adequate means of shelter and were largely at the mercy of nature and its vagaries. Extreme weather conditions, rain, snow, thunderstorms posed threats to our body and many would perish

under its onslaught. Shelter less existence also made us an easy prey to wild animals and at night one or two persons in a social group took turns in watching over while the majority slept. This certainly was not an ideal or a sustainable method of leading one's life. Human ingenuity thereupon devised ways and means to build houses wherein people could spend the night peacefully, insulated from any threat to life by nature and wildlife. Building houses and sleeping in great comfort have now assumed a state of art and no civilized society today is bereft of it.

We may have managed to get complete protection from minor natural events like extreme weather or torrential rainfall, but continue to remain vulnerable to natural events of cataclysmic dimensions like earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Some of these phenomena have been responsible for converting our sleep into one of permanent nature. Several human settlements are known to have been completely wiped out when natural disasters of this nature and dimensions have struck them. Surely, when these events take place during the night time which they often do, the threat to our life becomes much greater.

2. The internal threat: Sleep apnea.

However, the threat that we are directly concerned with, and something which is linked with our lifestyle is more internal in nature and unless we start paying adequate attention to it, it can assume the role of one of the biggest killers. It already is, in somewhat indirect way affecting our heart, our breathing pattern and affects our several body organs that get deprived of adequate oxygen during the sleep state.

Doctors pronounce a person dead when either his

heart stops functioning or when he suffers an irreparable brain damage. These are in real sense symptoms that help a physician arrive at a conclusive proof of death. We also need to look at the causes that have led to the heart condition becoming so weak that it ceases to function. We also need to investigate the reasons that caused damage to the most important faculty that a human being is invested with, his brain with a complex web of nerves and veins.

Conventional advice given by a doctor to a patient with weak heart condition is to regulate his diet, weight, exercise and reduce his cholesterol content. A neuro-physician will also echo similar advice and chip in with a few psychosomatic ones, but eventually it is our lifestyle that will have an important bearing on the state of our heart and brain. Much of it is linked with our sleep state and we often disregard it at our own peril.

Sleep to all living beings is mandatory and perhaps as important as eating, breathing and performing all other necessary functions. We spend one third of our life sleeping. While its primary objective is to rest and rejuvenate, some important activities take place during this period that have a profound impact on our lifestyle. Simplest of all is that if you have not had a good night sleep, your next day becomes highly unproductive and you spend it in a listless manner. This is the most common refrain amongst light and bad sleepers.

It is however important to know that much more happens at night when we usually go to sleep.

First of all we must understand that the age-old view about beauty sleep is not a myth. Sleep lessens the

severity of wrinkles and dark spots on our face and neck. Increased growth hormone release is believed to be linked to the fasting state which develops during sleep. There is now adequate evidence to show that skin cells regenerate faster at night than during the day. Cell division happens throughout the day but peaks during the middle of the night. This is literal renewal and rejuvenation during sleep. The peak in cell division happens even if you stay awake at night. However, the surge in growth hormone does not. Seven to eight hours of sleep is imperative for healthy look, general well-being and productivity.

It is a well known fact that our body comprises trillions of cells (7 trillions) and each cell has a short shelf life. They must die pretty soon, at least once a year and give way to the generation of new cells. Faster they die, better it is for our health vigour and vitality. During youth the death and regeneration of cells is much faster than in the old age. In other words, several elements in our system must perish to give us a new and youthful look and concomitant energy. On the same analogy we must die metaphorically and temporarily to maintain our youthfulness and energy. This we do by sleeping every night at the appointed hour. The first essential requirement therefore is to necessarily sleep and never miss it or postpone it beyond acceptable limits.

This is indeed essential for our cosmetic appearance, but our concern should be more with another phenomenon that takes place inexorably during the day and much more so during our sleep. That relates to our breathing, and the manner and quantity of oxygen that our body assimilates during that state.

It is interesting to note that ordinarily, even in our awakened state we are not fully aware of our breathing and its pattern. Evidently this awareness reaches its lowest ebb during the sleep state. Indeed our awareness is at its minimum level with respect to all our body functions. Here again it is our brain that continues to function as a watchdog. While it sends out signals to all parts of our body in an active mode during the day, it remains vigilant to signals that pose any threat to our body, even during the sleep hours. It is not for nothing that wise men have described our brain and intellect as the finest gift of nature to mankind and perhaps to the entire living organism.

Although there are no two views about the importance of the functions that our brain performs, it is prudent not to take its continuous vigilance for granted.

Now let us observe what happens when we go to sleep. Having completed our last minute chores we place our head on the pillow and sometimes with a prayer on our lips, seek the world of quiet and solitude. Ordinarily, it takes a person 15-20 minutes on an average, to convert rest into sleep. It is safe to assume that majority of our gross body parts are resting during this period. Our muscles, bones and other limbs are also in a state of relative rest and the only thing that is happening in respect to them is the cell division. The blood circulation happens unabated. Our heart is also beating with its normal rate and regularity. The digestive process also keeps its regular pace and all organs involved are doing their job unaffected by any external factor. Most important of all, our breathing process is also fully engaged in the process of inspiration and expiration unencumbered by any emotional

pressure. And here lies a catch that makes the position tricky for some of us.

Human beings have evolved over time and their normal posture is vertical in nature. Most of our work and functions are performed in that position. However as soon as we assume horizontal position we become vulnerable both externally as well as in performance of our body functions. Our sleep state is almost entirely in a horizontal position; on our back, on our stomach; sideways on the left or on the right side. This change in posture from the vertical to horizontal also affects our breathing process. The passage through which oxygen goes into our system is aligned with our normal posture that is vertical, and as soon as we lie down this passage also becomes horizontal. Ordinarily, this passage should ensure smooth flow of oxygen into our system, but in those who are overweight, or have a thick neckline or are given to excessive snoring, this passage can get contracted, and in some cases shut temporarily resulting in a temporary stoppage of oxygen. This triggers a signal to the brain and the passage gets opened with a jerk. After a while this phenomenon is repeated and during the night may affect the person with many episodes of this nature adversely, both by depriving him of deep sleep for the required period, as also cause unnecessary strain on his heart condition. Oxygen saturation in the body also gets attenuated considerably.

This situation leads to the following:

1. That person is deprived of proper sleep for the required period.
2. During the sleep state he gets a reduced supply of oxygen in his system.

3. He feels tired and listless during the day caused by lack of adequate sleep.
4. He has a tendency to fall off to sleep while sitting or driving.
5. This condition which in medical terminology is known as sleep-disorders or apnea has an adverse impact on the heart condition.
6. This condition affects the lifestyle and productivity of a person in a serious way and if not attended timely can cause severe damage. It can prove fatal in certain cases of serious obstructive disorders.

Thankfully, the medical world is seized of this matter in a proactive way and today serious research has unveiled interesting findings about this phenomenon that has a tremendous impact on our lifestyle. New support systems have been devised that ensure both adequate sleep and supply of oxygen. It is indeed prudent to seek help and counsel whenever the need arises. If the symptoms of general lassitude, sleepiness, excessive snoring and involuntary black-out appear, it would be wise to take the required treatment.

The phenomenon of breathing takes place by a regular process of inspiration and expiration. Both these activities are equally important. Inspiration is essential because adequate oxygen intake must happen so that the oxygenated blood carries it to all parts of body which function with the help of oxygen. Our vital organs that are organic in nature would otherwise become inert and stop performing their prescribed functions and affect other organs. Interaction of oxygen with the organic matter inside our body results in the production of two entities, oxidants and carbon-dioxide, and both create a deleterious effect. Doctors

often prescribe use of anti-oxidants to neutralize the effect of excessive oxidation. As far as carbon-dioxide is concerned, researches reveal that at the end of every expiration cycle, 30% of it remains in our body and we need to work periodically for its expulsion. This is also an integral part of yogic exercise. One of the simplest ways to get rid of excess carbon-dioxide is to spend some time in deep breathing. Deeper breathing brings in more oxygen and invariably helps to expel larger quantity of residual gases from our system. This again is linked with adequate intake of oxygen and proper attention to our breath and breathing phenomenon.

Importance of Water

1. The next critical issue is that of water that we must imbibe at regular intervals. It must be pure. It must be adequate and in the required proportion to the weight and body mass.
2. Usually it should be two-third of the body mass. All parts of the body need to be kept in a state where they have adequate lubrication like a well-oiled machine and the best lubricant for our body and body parts is water. The throat, stomach, eyes and skin provide immediate signals, but this is essential for all parts and organs of the body.
3. While we need adequate quantity of water at regular intervals because of its loss in consequence of our movement, sweating, urinating and for maintaining balance in the solid and liquid proportions of our body, it also acts as a purifier washing down several impurities that get into our system through conscious or unconscious acts.

4. Ordinarily, one should avoid drinking water with, or immediately on completing the meal. The digestive juices released by the body get diluted and their efficacy is reduced. It is advisable to drink water, after one to one and half hour after the meal.
5. Water is a purifier par excellence, and unlike all other liquids helps to retain the original quality of the user, after use. It leaves no marks and amongst the three states of matter, solid, liquid and gas, water the liquid is put to maximum use. Our universe is dynamic in nature and constant mobility is its biggest attribute. Here also, the universe must depend upon water for its constant mobility.
6. Water is the elixir of life. We have heard about the mythological story of a fight between the gods and demons for the possession of a pitcher containing nectar that promised immortality. The existence of that nectar is indeed a myth and the next best thing is water. Ask a person with a parched throat or, the one who has traveled miles in the desert in search of water. It would be nothing less than nectar that promises instant relief and nirvana.

   Apart from the mandatory requirement of water for every living being on this earth, water also helps to maintain adequate humidity in the atmosphere. This is essential both for the maintenance of the required vegetation in the universe and the comforts of our skin. It is incumbent on every individual to conserve it and avoid excessive use or wastage.

   Without overemphasizing the relevance of water at an individual level, we must also become aware of the larger picture and its importance to maintain the universe in its pristine form. Metaphorically speaking,

water is heavenly nectar. It comes to earth from the sky and goes back to it to come back again. This phenomenon is occasioned by nature and enormous quantity of energy is expended to keep the cycle going. Indeed, the presence of water is coterminous with life. All space explorations have tried to look for the presence of water on other planets to ascertain the existence of life. Historically, all major civilizations and modern cities have come around the banks of rivers, worldwide.

The objective of flagging the evidentiary significance of water is to merely draw attention to its importance in the macro sense and sensitize us to the need for preserving it without wasting it in large quantities. We know that water purifies our body and helps to maintain complete balance in our system. It performs exactly the same functions for the universe and it is incumbent upon us to ensure that we deal with it in such a manner as to achieve proper ecological balance.

Interestingly, water comes to earth only by way of a rainfall. Some of it undergoes the process of condensation and freezes into snow. It goes back to sky in the form of vapours. Our environment thus witnesses all three forms of water in the solid, liquid and gaseous state.

It is important to understand that every drop of *pure* water that is available to us requires energy for production. Nature has to work overtime and use its seemingly inexhaustible reservoir of energy which is diverted from its other legitimate and perhaps more important tasks. This disturbs the energy balance in the system. It is therefore wise to conserve water which is increasingly becoming scarce.

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Food Intake

Amongst other imperatives of life, food is the third necessity in that order.

1. The quality of food.
2. The quantity of food.
3. Number of meals.
4. The time interval between meals.
5. The time of eating in 24 hour cycle
6. Its correlation with age and body condition.

One common occurrence that takes place with all these necessities of life, relates to their intake into our system and their exit from it. We are usually conscious and also careful sometimes, about the quantum that we imbibe, but seldom give any thought to its release from our body. For instance, we may sometime attend to the quality and quantity of oxygen that we inhale, but do we ever pay adequate attention to complete the process of exhalation? More often than not, unless we are experiencing deep breathing exercise, we do not complete the process of exhalation. In some ways, this is far more important than the process of inhalation which in any case we do in an automation state. What we inhale is pure oxygen which is good for our system and after reacting with several organic materials inside the body, oxygen is converted into carbon-dioxide, a dangerous and harmful gas. Any residual part of this gas if not fully exhaled, creates problems. The danger to our body and the related issues is not so much from the external factors like pollution in the atmosphere, as from our own inadequate attention to the normal process of throwing out the toxic gases. This is absolutely in conformity to the standard dictum that most of our enemies are within, and we need to fight them out just by paying attention to our lifestyle.

Same is true of our drinking and eating habits. We measure the quantity of water and food intake, but do not pay commensurate attention to their release from the body. Excess water and food particles that are not used up for conversion into the required energy, assume toxicity and become the cause of all our ailments. They reduce our immunity levels apart from causing distension and avoidable discomfort. It is well known that constipation and excess water in our body creates more problems than an empty stomach. It is somewhat like an empty receptacle which has not been cleaned up properly. You pour clean water or food in it and that also gets polluted. You would not want to partake anything from that receptacle. Why should our body remain unclean before adding another round of food in to it? Proper use of air and water alone can detoxify and clean up our system from inside. We have got so used to the superficial nature of our lifestyle that we become alert only when something makes a visual impact. What goes on beneath the surface is in fact, far more important than what is above it and requires equal attention, if not more.

One of the fundamental requirements of keeping our body and system in perfect shape, and indeed improve its immunity levels is to ensure that we keep it detoxified by as efficient methods, as by which we imbibe our daily needs.

While air and water are mandatory requirements for sheer survival and do not have any substitutes, much can be said about food, its variety in the form of multiple cuisines, its availability in the liquid and solid forms, styles of cooking, its presentation, their manner of eating and its distinct regional flavours. Our concern with air and water is essentially limited to purity, whereas intake of food is accompanied with several styles and ceremonies.

Amongst some affluent sections of societies all over the world, food has been raised to the level of an art, and chefs around the world are constantly trying to excel in taste and presentation.

An average adult spends three to four hours in a day on food related activities.

For millions of poor people on this globe, food is treated as a necessity, while for others it is necessity imbibed in a luxurious style.

For the animal world, hunting and scrounging for food is the main occupation and they remain constantly engaged in it all their life.

For the human species, food is essential and important but is regarded as one of the several occupations that he must engage himself in his lifetime.

For a very large section of human race in this planet, animals and animal products constitute an important component of their staple diet. For animals however, human beings become food only as an accident and this is a rare phenomenon.

Food is not merely an occupation with people. It is an industry employing millions of people around the globe. Some earn their daily food exclusively by feeding others.

Ironically speaking, amongst the three ingredients that provide energy for our survival, sustenance and work, air and water are relatively more important. However, the quantum of attention that they receive from us is inversely proportional to their importance and need for us. There are perhaps two reasons for it. Firstly, these are available easily and free of cost (however on account of widespread environmental pollution especially of the water bodies, we have started putting a price on water though) and secondly, these are bland and are not amenable to any variety in taste.

Food is an altogether different story, both because of multiple sources of its production in fields, plants, trees and animals, as well as evolution of diverse taste buds human beings have developed and acquired overtime. Each geographical region in the world has developed its own group of food items, depending upon availability in its catchments, weather conditions and the recipes that were passed on formally or informally by the family elders. Each group would experiment within their own social circle and their staple food more or less remained unchanged. Advancement in travel and communications has affected many spheres of human life, and food is in large measures one of them. Today, it is possible to savour foods from scores of regions/nations within a stretch of a mile in any major city of the world. Interestingly, nothing in this planet has spread as far and wide, as food and related products.

Weather conditions in different regions of the globe also, have had considerable impact on how our food habits have evolved. Different foods and styles emerged in arctic zones, areas close to equator, rain forest zones and regions with high temperatures and humid conditions. Ironically, one would observe that as a general practice, people living in areas of cold climate eat cold foods, and those in temperate regions have a preference for hot foods, both cooked and served hot, as well as hot and spicy.

However, the physiological composition of all human beings the world over being similar, if not identical, the need for basic nutrients and organic components are not very different. For example, every class of food must have protein, carbohydrates, salts and some fatty acids. These are ingredients that help, both in growth and sustenance of a human body. Adequate proportions of salt and glucose are also mandatory for any healthy body.

Within the available range of foods in a particular region, there are variations in tastes and food preferences. One clear division that can be drawn relates to people eating vegetarian, and another class which eats non-vegetarian food. Of course, non-vegetarian eaters have no taboo as far as vegetables are concerned, which may or may not be the case with vegetarians.

Food occupies an important place in the lives of all human beings. The nature of food, its quality, quantity, frequency of eating and timing play an important role and hence, are an integral part of our lifestyle management.

Bhagwadgita identifies three primary characteristics in all human beings and calls them Gunas. These are described as satvik, rajsik and tamsik. Each one of us has these three gunas present in us in different proportions, and prevalence of one ordinarily, establishes our general reputation in society or the manner in which others view us. It further says that there are three categories of food corresponding to these gunas and our food preferences also to an extent, influence our gunas. There is thus a symbiotic relationship between what we are and what we eat. It can also be interpreted in a different way, which is that people with the prevalence of a particular guna, generally have a propensity to eat corresponding kind of food. Let us look at the relevant verses of the Bhagwadgita reproduced below. They are at serial number 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Chapter 17 and are as follows:

Aahar Tu Api Sarvasya
Trividha Bhavati Priya
Yagya Tapa Tatha Danam
Tesham Bhedam Imam Shrinu *Ch. 17, V. 7*

Krishna tells Arjuna, "Everybody has a preference

for food in accordance to his nature and gunas. Sacrifice, austerities and charity are also of three kinds, and I shall describe to you the differences in them all."

Aayu Satva Bal Arogya
Sukh Priti Vivardhna
Rasya Snigdha Sthira Hridhya
Aahara Satvik Priya *Ch. 17, V. 8*

"People with satvik dispositions are naturally fond of foods that bring about enhancement in age, intellect and strength, improve health and happiness and induce zest for life. Foods that possess life-invigorating juices, adequate fat and prepared to be fully agreeable to taste, remain their preferred choice."

Katu Amal Lavan Atyushan
Tikshan Ruksha Vidhahina
Ahara Rajasasya Ishta
Dukh Shoka Mayprada *Ch. 17, V. 9*

"Bitter, sour, peppered with excess salt, very hot and dry kind of food is preferred by people with rajsik tendencies. These foods cause acidity, tension and are a cause of misery."

Yatayamam Gatrasam
Puti Parushitam Cha Yat
Uchishtam Chamedhyam
Bhojanam Tamaspriyam *Ch. 17, V. 10*

"Semi-cooked, smelly, tasteless, decomposed and putrid foods that are prepared in an impure manner are eaten by people with tamsik tendencies".

This is a broad categorization of different kinds of food and people with corresponding preferences. However as

mentioned earlier, all of us have varying proportions of three gunas described above, and usually there is a mix of all kinds of foods in our plate at different points in time. It is not as if one set of people eat the same kind of food all the time, but people with relative prevalence of gunas show distinct propensities with foods of that category. Some of us normally eat food which is less oily, has little or no fat, but often give in to certain indulgences on festive occasions and then express regret. Important corollary to all this is that food has a symbiotic relationship with our state of body as well as our mind and intellect. It is not difficult to discern the reason for this situation. Semi-cooked and unhygienic food will create turmoil in our guts and it will not be possible to maintain decent deamanour. Habitual eating of this nature will evidently, keep us in the same state leading to several adverse changes in the body. Unhealthy body will certainly not possess a healthy mind. Healthy eating habits, agreeable to our body systems will keep us in a cheerful disposition, generating positive energy that is entirely conducive to maximizing our output, and cooperating with others in all our endeavours.

Another aspect of our lifestyle management relates to, living our life that is in sync with nature and our immediate environment. We define yoga as seeking perfect harmony between our inside and outside. Our outside what is present in close proximity to where we normally reside. The 'outside' with respect to a person living in India is not what is available in Norway and has to be something that is either grown, or is easily available within India, and that also something close to where he resides. There is also an issue of affordability, apart from its agreeability when we try to obtain exotic foodstuff from exotic locations. A simple statement must be made in this regard.

What is grown and produced in Norway is ideally suited for Norwegians and Indians would do well to preferably imbibe food that is produced in India.

Another issue that needs to be factored in with respect to our food preferences relates to eating food, especially fruits and vegetables that are not grown in the season in which they are eaten. Question of affordability crops up here as well, and so does its agreeability.

It has become fashionable to buy expensive fruits and food products grown and produced in far away places in a season they are not grown here. They will certainly not make us yogis and indeed, are not in conformity with the ideals of good lifestyle management.

There are also now serious concerns being expressed about genetically modified food with predetermined quantity of glucose content, especially in fruits. Scientific investigations being carried out, reveal changes in the body's cellular composition as a result of imbibing large quantities of modified food. It only re-emphasizes the natural superiority of the naturally grown food over engineered food of any kind.

It is evident from above that nature of food that we absorb in our system is an integral part of our lifestyle management.

Ideally speaking, our food should belong to the satvik category, should primarily be picked up from what is grown and produced in our neighborhood, should be fresh and consist of the seasonal variety.

While we have talked about the range of different qualities of food, adequate attention also need to be paid to the quantum of food, frequency of eating, time of eating and the correlation of age with the quantity.

Gita, in chapter 6, verse 17 tenders the following advice in this regard:

Yukt Ahar Viharasya
Yukt Cheshtasya Karmasu
Yukt Swapan Bodhasya
Yogo Bhavati Dukh Ha

"Yoga that removes unhappiness is easily available to those who eat in moderation, put in required amount of effort and observe moderate hours of sleep and the awakened state."

This statement is self-evident. While it is not possible to exactly earmark the quantity of food each of us must imbibe, it can be stated without any reservations that it should be taken in moderate quantities, and keeping in view the capacity of each body to imbibe and digest. *The best guide to this would be to stop eating just when you think you need a little more. Fasting of any kind, for long hours must however be, strictly avoided.* While our body and its digestive system has its own limitations, it is also not accustomed to long hours of deprivation of essential food.

Some people whose occupation involves long hours of physical labour, need more food and nutrition. They are advised to eat in moderate quantities with frequent intervals, and with short interval between meals. Ideal gap between meals should be four to four and half hours, but in the case of labour intensive people, it is advisable to reduce it by an hour between each meal. That is the minimum time required for the food to traverse the long winding path of our intestines, pack up and be ready to receive the next lot of food.

As we age, our need for nutrition, as also our capacity to chew and digest comes down. The pace of all our activities

also gets considerably reduced. Food intake and its frequency must also be gradually tapered down. In older age, it is advisable to substitute fluid diet in place of some part of the solid proteins and carbohydrates.

In a youthful state, the destruction and the regeneration of our cells and tissues, take place at a much faster pace, and that is the reason of our youthful and fresh look and feel. We need more energy than normal for this dispensation as well. The pace slows down considerably as we age, and hence requires less component of energy for the recycle effect.

Those of us who do not change their eating habits, especially with respect to the quantum of food, tend to add on weight rather quickly. Largely, the problem of obesity affects people during the second half of their existence. The weaker limbs at that stage also make sure that we do not lose that extra weight very easily.

Quantity of food that we imbibe must come down proportionately with age.

There is another very interesting feature of our food preferences. We remain largely enslaved by our taste, regardless of the nutrient content or its agreeability with our body needs. Ironically, foods that cause problems to us are the ones that usually form part of our preferred cuisine. A person with high level of sugar in his body and with heightened diabetic tendencies shows greater proclivity towards consuming sweetened food. Additionally, foods that we enjoy eating in the relative context are also consumed in larger quantity, leading to avoidable indigestion or flatulence. There are several food and food products that are bitter or bland, but are high on nutrition and medicinal content. Turmeric for instance, is known

for its medicinal characteristics, but tastes bitter. All kinds of medicines, as a general rule follow a formulation that makes them taste bitter, but they help us in fighting disease and pain.

The Bhagwadgita makes a general observation pertaining to several experiences that we come across in life and some of them have relevance to the food intake as well. In chapter 18, Verse 37 it says:

Yattat Agre Visham Iv
Priname Amritopamam
Tat Sukham Satvikam Proktam
Atma Budhi Prasadjam

"Something that appears bitter and disagreeable like poison in the beginning turns out to be nectar in effect. That is Satvik in nature and provides relief and happiness to mind and body".

Vishya Indriya Sanyogyat
Yat Tat Agre Amritopamam
Pariname Visham Eev Tat
Sukham Rajasam Smirtam

"Happiness that springs from the conjunction of senses and material objects seems like nectar in the beginning, but in effect is poison and is rajsik in nature."

Conversely, anything that gives great pleasure and happiness to begin with is injurious in the long-run.

All medicines and pharmaceutical formulations are bitter but help to cure.

Sweetness in any form is usually consumed in large quantity and we are all aware of its deleterious impact.

Mention must be made here of the kind of food we imbibe. Human body, a product of nature is structured

to consume natural products and there is a bountiful of naturally grown food available in the universe. Notwithstanding its abundant availability, we exhibit a distinct preference for animal food. Would it not be correct to state that animal food is generally meant for animals and human beings can actually do without it? Non-availability of alternatives and imperatives of survival may in certain situations justify resorting to eating non-naturally grown food, but in a civilized society where man has a free access to multiple choices, preying on animal food seems little far-fetched.

Another fact which must find mention here is that whatever we imbibe becomes part of us. We are essentially, cellular beings. Eating animal food also brings about an integration of animal cells in human body and perhaps generate similar tendencies.

Chapter Four

WHO WE ARE?

The fundamental principle governing our lifestyle management relates to a complete synchronization of the gross and the subtle that is an integral part of our being, with what is present outside. In other words, we must seek to live like a yogi.

Metaphorically speaking, each one of us carries the entire universe on our shoulders. Universe appears to envelope each one of us, from all directions. The only way we can effectively carry its weight is to keep our feet firmly on the ground. *This statement conjures up a commonly seen picture of a man carrying a globe on his back.* Any mismatch in our composition with that of the universe, will make us buckle down. Figuratively speaking, that will change our posture from vertical to the horizontal which is against our true nature.

Let us at this stage make an inquiry into 'who we are'

Vedas are believed to be the most ancient scriptures that are available in the written form. These are Rigved, Yajurved, Atharvaved and Samved. The complete esoteric contents of these scriptures were beyond understanding by normal

people and hence, some highly enlightened sages down the ages, deciphered and interpreted them and created what is commonly referred to as Upanishads. The collection and body of these Upanishads espouses what is universally known as the Vedanta philosophy. One of the famous phrases mentioned in Vedanta scriptures is 'Aham Brahmasmi'. There is another that says, 'Tatvam asi'. Literally translated, these mean 'I am the Universe', and 'you are that', respectively. We would examine the implications of these statements in the scientific and spiritual context.

The scientific implication will perhaps not pose any great problems and something for which adequate empirical evidence is available. It would really mean that all living beings are an integral part of this universe, and each one contains all the elements present and known to the scientific world, in the same proportion as the proportion of our being to the universe. To illustrate, our body contains two-third water. That is also the proportion of water to the land mass in this planet. All the elements discovered by science such as oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, sodium, potassium, zinc, mercury to name a few, are present in our system. This is how we get completely integrated with the universe. Any variations in the levels of these pre-determined compositions will necessarily spell trouble for us. We are aware of the consequences of sodium and potassium deficiencies in our body. The iron deficiency means drop in the hemoglobin in the blood. Insufficient water in the body leads to dehydration that can prove fatal, if timely replenishment does not take place. In other words, it is important to make sure that our intake must ensure that we maintain complete balance between what is present outside and what we have inside our body. Any

thing excess or surplus would inevitably, create health problems.

Balance of all kinds is the key to a good lifestyle management.

The spiritual interpretation of the Vedanta thought may pose some difficulty to an entirely rational mind. It is good indeed, essential to be a rationalist, but that may not be enough for us to understand and realize the truth in all situations. There is knowledge beyond our sense perception and anything that does not contradict reason, or past knowledge and experience, should be gracefully accepted as proof. Before moving into spiritual space, we should be armed with reason, and must also be in possession of adequate amount of faith that takes care of the perceptive phenomena which have to be reckoned with respect to all spiritual matters. *Let us therefore approach the spiritual content with reason in our intellect and faith in our heart.*

One more beacon of light needs to be sought from Bhagwadgita and that will make our task easier.

The reference is to verse 4 and 5 from chapter 7, which is as follows:

Bhumiraponalo Vayu
Kham Mano Budhirev Cha
Ahankar Itiyam Me
Bhinna Prakriti Ashtdha — *Ch. 7, V. 4*

Apreyam It Tu Anyam
Prakritim Vidhhi Me Param
Jevbhutam Mahabaho
Yayedam Dharyate Jagat — *Ch. 7, V. 5*

Krishna while explaining to Arjuna, different aspects of His nature and attributes, makes a distinction between the gross and the subtle and says:

"Earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, intellect and ego are eight distinct components of My gross nature. Another attribute which makes me omnipresent, and by which I assume the ownership of entire universe is My power of unlimited consciousness".

Krishna, in verse 6 of the same chapter clarifies it further and says:

Aitadyonini Bhutani
Sarvani Iti Updharya
Aham Kritsnasya Jagat
Prabhava Pralaya Tatha

"You must know that all living beings are the products of these two sets of My nature, and I am the cause of their creation and destruction".

These statements made by Krishna in the three verses, corroborates our description of the gross entities that were discussed above. Our body is made out of 'Panchbhoot', the five elements and three other entities known as mind, intellect and ego. In verse 5, He adds another dimension to His being, which is described as His power of unlimited consciousness. This is also known as 'Chetna', complete awareness. Indeed, this is what shall help us define and understand 'what we are'.

It is important for us to understand that we are an infinitesimal part of this universe and in reality, an integral part of that Supreme entity that has been described as the power of unlimited consciousness. Everyone in this world refers to Him as God. We have in us, all those that are present in Him, eight gross features and 'Chetna', the awareness. Our real self therefore is our awareness which everyone in this world refers to as 'the soul'.

It is equally important for us to understand that by

the strength of our soul, which by its very nature is eternal and imperishable, we are here to stay for ever. Our body is transient but our real self is for ever. We must necessarily factor this perennial reality in our discussion of lifestyle management, or else we shall miss out an important aspect of our existence in this universe. Our soul is a permanent resident of this universe and is subjected to a constant cycle of births and deaths, till it is fit and ready to go back to its origin, the Supreme power. This will happen only on the strength of our karmas and indeed, with the support of an ideal lifestyle management. Vedanta philosophy and Bhagwadgita clearly establish our identity as one of permanence and of a periodical phase of birth and death. The death is only to the body but we live on for ever.

This is what Krishna tells Arjuna in chapter 2 at verse 12:

Na Tveham Jatu Nasam
Na Tveham Janadhipa
Na Chaiv Bhavishyam
Sarve Vyamata Param

"Never in the past were you and I not present, and there never will be any occasion when you, I and these kings waiting to fight the war are not present".

For the purposes of our lifestyle management, we will therefore define 'who we are' as consisting of body and soul, one part of which is perishable and the other, eternal. Human body in its visible appearance is gross, and possesses certain gross components that perform essentially subtle functions. These are largely confined to our senses, mind and intellect. There are five senses that create knowledge and each of them has a gross symbol, but the role they perform is of a subtle nature and relates to perception.

For instance, Nose is a gross entity, but it possesses olfactory power which is subtle. Similarly our brain can be described in gross terms, but intellect and the functions it performs are entirely subtle in nature. Memory, power of analysis and discrimination, retrieval of information and imagination are all subtle functions. Each of these would require different treatment in response to their distinctive nature.

Chapter Five

THE BODY BEAUTIFUL

In chapter three, we had dealt with the issues of air, water and food and their manner of assimilation. There are several other aspects of our body that require equal attention and this is a life long exercise which must be dovetailed in our daily routine.

Human body is a marvel of engineering and architecture that is impossible to be replicated by any human endeavour. It calls for the highest creative talents to put together, a complex structure with a myriad web of nerves, veins, muscles, bones and other functional organs, and introduce a mechanism that ensures an uninterrupted flow of blood which keeps purifying itself regularly. A battery of self-generating low voltage electricity is also placed somewhere that ensures constant communication between different parts of the body and links it to the storehouse of unlimited energy, the brain. The picture so far will at best make only a robot. The architect and the maker had to bring in the elements of sense-perception, imagination, emotions and the power of discrimination. All that and much more is accomplished, only by joining a tiny non-descript looking sperm with a female egg.

I dare any human being with all the technology at his command to attempt this feat!

Human body, being a creation of nature must necessarily follow all the rules and regulations that nature follows. Any other position would be completely untenable. A cursory look indeed, tells us that it does, and any departure from nature's protocol lands the body in serious trouble. We need to examine how. We will first look at the compliance part.

One of the primary attributes of nature is subjecting everything in its jurisdiction, to a cycle of destruction and regeneration. Everything in our body, every cell dies and renews itself periodically. Our nails, tissues, hair and our skin cells keep renewing constantly. These are the visible parts and same thing keeps happening to other parts of the body, and their cells keep re-inventing themselves at regular intervals.

Nature has devised one of the most efficient systems of drainage. For example, it has created appropriate gradient for all rivers that finally flow into a bigger reservoir called the seas. Human body too, has a similar drainage system for all that which flows inside it, to keep it going and prevent stagnation. Nature has a huge bounty of two most efficient cleansing agents, air and water and these help all living beings to perform the cleaning act. Human body is also in possession of a system that helps it to detoxify itself regularly. For external impurities, air and water alone provide the initial comfort. For instance, if something goes inside our eye, the first move is to wash it with excess water and drain out the impurity. Deep inside the body, our pancreatic juices are capable of dissolving all the food that we imbibe, and help to flush it out.

Nature performs all its functions in three different states of matter, which are solid, liquid and gas. All three states are however inter-convertible. For instance, ice that is a solid state, when heated becomes water and water when heated further, evaporates into air. Conversely, air when cooled down coverts into water. A closer observation of various phenomena that take place in this universe will reveal its dynamic nature. Nothing in this universe remains static for long and if it does, it starts rotting pretty soon. Earth keeps moving around the sun, every other celestial body moves around another body bigger than it, and the presence of the kinetic energy and gravitational pull, keeps all matter in a state of perpetual motion. Bulk of matter also remains in a liquid state which facilitates its dynamic nature. At a micro level, all living beings are also conditioned to remain in a state of motion. Within the human body as well, constant movement keeps it warm and alive. In this process, it keeps consuming and generating energy which adds to, and subtracts from the total cosmic energy in the universe.

The classic example of movement in our body is evidenced by the perpetual phenomenon of blood circulation that keeps the body warm and carries adequate oxygen to all parts in required measures.

It is extremely important that this movement continues in an uninterrupted manner and our veins that carry blood to different organs, muscles, tissues and bones perform their job efficiently and in a balanced way, both in terms of speed and quantity. Any departure from the standard, will lead to low or high blood pressures, affecting the overall balance in the body. If timely corrections are not made, this can cause serious problems to the minor and major organs of the body affecting their normal functioning.

Uninterrupted and a balanced movement is the key to our absolute well-being.

One of the ways to ensure is to take medicines that help to thin the blood and balances out the pressure, and this is the most common practice employed by a majority of people usually, at a certain age. Another preventive option is to address the issue at the terminal points of our body. Let us examine how.

There are ten terminal points in our two hands, five in each. Our feet contain ten points in front and two in the rear. The last and the most important terminal in our body of course, is our head. Veins are spread across all parts of the body and religiously carry blood to all, keeping them healthy and functioning. It does not require great imagination to understand that at the terminal points, there are two layers of veins and there is a turn that inevitably slows down the flow, and may in certain cases block the smooth flow of blood.

Frequent application of a simple physical pressure on ten terminal points on our hands, and on twelve points in our feet can considerably ease the pressure and facilitate the normal flow at the required speed. This is obviously a routine procedure and may not address the problems in the case of a chronic or an acute situation. Our terminal points require special attention for another reason. While many of our body parts are enclosed and covered, the terminal points are exposed to the elements of nature. We also have to make an extensive use of these points in performing several chores and in ensuring constant movement. Our contact with the outside world, in the physical sense is largely through the instrumentality of our hands and feet.

One does not have to over-emphasize the importance of keeping our terminal points perpetually neat and clean.

Special care must be taken to keep our hands, fingers and nails absolutely clean. This will ensure that not only, we wear a clean look, and not pass on infection to others we also protect our own self against infection of any sorts. We make an extensive use of our hands and fingers in a variety of jobs during the day. The organic nature of our hands, attract several harmful bacteria that remain perpetually clung to our hands, and their touch with other parts of the body including eating, can be hazardous. One must never rub one's eyes with one's hands, desist from digging gold from our nasal passages and avoid poking ear drums. The best material that can be used for all these activities is a swab of cotton.

Let us look closely at our body again and count the number of physical openings or doors to it. A careful observation will reveal nine of them. These are:

Two nasal passages
Two ears
Two eyes
One mouth
These add up to seven
There are two in the middle part of the body, taking the complete count to nine.
The Bhagwadgita refers to the body as 'Navdware pure dehi' in one of its verses.

Our body is a veritable fortress, protected by a thick layer of skin that covers and protects its major part. Every fortress must necessarily have gates to permit easy ingress and egress, and an easy contact with the external world from where it has to draw its sustenance. A strong survival instinct

guides their operation and each one is either positioned in such a way, or has certain attributes that provide adequate protection to them. There is an in-built mechanism in each of these openings which ensures that protection.

There are five doors that face the elements directly and in front of the body. These are two nasal passages, two eyes and mouth. Our nasal openings facilitate inhalation and exhalation of the primary requirement that is oxygen. Apart from the growth of hair that functions as a brush to stop tiny particles to gain entry, nasal passages possess a capacity to blow out the impurities of air.

It is advisable to perform blowing out operations, five to ten times during the course of the day. This will achieve two things. Firstly, it will throw out tiny particles that invariably deposit on the inside walls of the nose and secondly, it will help to jettison the residual carbon-dioxide in the body.

Our eyes are provided with standard hydration that can dissolve the minute particles that inevitably enter it from the atmosphere. It also has an intrinsic nature to blink periodically, providing rest and protection. Night sleep ensures its closure for a long interval, giving it much needed rest. The most obvious signal of lack of rest and adequate sleep lies in the look of the eyes, and being an important part of our personality, they should look fresh and sharp.

It is also important to note that the only organs in our body that gets oxygen directly from the atmosphere are our eyes. Every other part in our system gets its oxygen supply from the process of blood circulation and the circulatory system. Polluted air, or air laden with smoke or suspended particles are injurious to our eyes directly and hence, there is need for taking adequate care in this regard.

One should try to maintain adequate moisture inside the

eyes by washing them two to three times a day. The preferred time is early in the morning and before going to bed. Our eyes have a soft covering, and care must be taken to wash them with clean water, and in a mild manner. Do not ever hit the eye balls with strong splash or a jet of water.

Emotional upsurge of any kind that is extreme in nature brings tears to our eyes. These could be tears of joy, or of extreme pain and sorrow. Our eyes sometimes become wells of water on seeing something that touches us deeply. An act of great human kindness, for instance, or an act of great sacrifice for saving another life does bring tears to one's eyes. All events that bring in tears to our eyes and keep them moist, except those that are occasioned by pain and sorrow, are preferable.

Human mouth is the biggest of all openings in our body, not designed to throw in a huge morsel of food, but to ensure an easy imbibe of different range of food articles, and chew them in an easily digestible form. Our mouth possesses an additional feature in the form of saliva that has some anti-bacterial qualities and helps to rid the food of some basic bacteria, before sending it down to the stomach. Interestingly, our teeth inside the mouth are arranged in such away that nothing that enters it escapes their impact and pressure. They break everything into small pieces to facilitate an easy entry into our system.

Food should be taken in small quantities and chewed properly before its entry into the stomach. Our intestines are designed to take in food only in small parts. Also teeth should be fully used for the purpose for which they are meant. They must also get enough exercise which they get only during the process of chewing. Brushing our teeth should not be treated as a necessary evil, and should be performed slowly and softly to avoid peeling off the essential layer of enamel which is the strongest material

in our body. Brushing teeth twice a day also helps strengthening of heart muscles.

The sixth and seventh openings that are our ears, are positioned sideways, and are architecturally designed with flaps and walls that protect it from getting exposed to the elements of nature headlong. Even then some impurities from air and water manage to get in.

Frequent cleaning of ear lobes and the passage inside, keeps our power of hearing intact for a long period. Any frictional resistance caused to sound reduces its efficacy considerably.

Thankfully our genitals and passage for major excreta have been positioned at one of the safest places of our anatomy. They are far removed from other openings of the body, completely removing any chance of self-inflicted infections.

However, the need to keep them in perfectly hygienic state cannot be overemphasized. Urinary tract is prone to infections because of the nature of material it has to deal with, and care should be taken to keep it absolutely clean.

In the previous chapter, we had discussed the essential components of God and found that all those were identical to what all of us possess, in different measures. We are in real sense, the true representation of that Supreme force. In other words, God resides within us and we do not need to look for Him anywhere outside of us.

Human body is a veritable temple, literally and metaphorically. Most householders make an extra effort to keep the little temple in their homes, absolutely neat and clean. It is equally important to treat one's body as a temple, and maintain it in a pure and hygienic state. Nature has done its bit in making the structure of human body as safe as possible, and it is up to us to ensure its primal state.

Chapter Six

BRAIN—THE NERVE CENTRE

While the human body is an architectural marvel, construction of his brain was a stroke of absolute genius. It requires great imagination to pack features that would function as an important command centre, and possess important subtle attributes that can literally take a person to any part of the world in a split of a second. Human intellect, the product of his brain is an entity that has no peers and is the subject of envy of all creatures, earthy or divine.

Human brain, is ageless and its proper usage makes it divine. While all other parts of human body are subject to decay and decline with the passage of time, human brain grows in strength and sharpness with use, provided it is used in a positive way. We may also be warned of its enormous destructive potential, if used in a negative way. Let us list out the important functions of our brain.

1. It is a storehouse of memory.
2. Power of analysis.
3. Power of discrimination.
4. Vision and imagination.
5. Storage of information.

6. Power of retrieval of information.
7. Courage and determination.
8. Will-power.
9. Creator of thoughts.
10. Creator of awareness.
11. Creator of consciouness.

Physiologically, our brain consists of a myriad web of nerves and several nerve centers, corresponding to different sensory functions that our body is required to perform, and is housed in a tough shell called the cranium which keeps them well protected. Growth of hair on top gives it an added cushion against the elements of nature. Nerves perform their functions with the help of particles called neurons (86 billions in number) which remain charged with electrostatic current, and move around on the strength of the low-voltage electricity.

Supremacy of the brain vis-à-vis other parts of the body remains unchallenged. The medical world was at some stage, divided in its view about the point of the death of a human being to coincide, either with stoppage of heart or of the brain. The debate has since, been more or less settled in favour of the brain. Let us take an enlightened peep inside the cranium and discover for ourselves what lies in there. The intention is not to look inside through the eyes of a surgeon, but through that of a common individual, with a common understanding of its functions.

However, before venturing into that sensitive region, it may be a good idea to discuss a few myths and wrong beliefs that most of us suffer from, with regard to our physiological functions. These relate to our sense of touch, smell, vision, hearing and taste. While the human body has distinct gross organs for each of these functions, the

relevant experience is not complete with in them. We need to elaborate on this statement.

The process of our vision is initiated by our eyes. No matter what we do we shall not be able to see any object in this world if we shut our eyes or are rendered blindfold. Even if we open our eyes, we shall not be able to see if our brain is damaged, or more specifically, if the corresponding nerve-centre for vision in our brain is damaged, or the link is ruptured. What appears to us as our eye only performs the job of a glass through which light from an object enters. Real image of that object is formed only at the nerve centre of the vision inside the brain facilitating the sighting. Every person diagnosed as blind, keeps his eyes in an open state and yet cannot see.

Similarly, a deaf person anatomically, is in possession of ears but his power of hearing is impaired, essentially because of the disruption in the link between his ears and the corresponding nerve-centre inside the brain. What look like ears to us, are only gateways for the sound and voices to enter, but the sensation of sound lies some where else. This phenomenon applies with equal relevance to the sense of smell, taste and touch. Our taste buds have a direct link with our brain cells and so does our olfactory sense.

The sense or the feeling of touch runs through the entire length and breadth of the body. How does our brain sitting five to six feet away (till the farthest point that is the sole of our feet) control that and every other sensation all over the body? Indeed it does exactly the same way as it does to other sense perceptions. A patient being prepared for a major surgery in any part of his anatomy is administered anesthesia, and he is instantly lost to the world. He is

fully alive but the administered anesthesia has only desensitized all his perceptive faculties, and most of all, his sense of touch. In reality, anesthesia goes to the brain and to the corresponding nerve centers that control all our sense perceptions.

The absolute supremacy of our brain and the functions it performs must make us sit up and recognize its immense worth. Nature has been very imaginative in this regard and it is not sheer coincidence why it has been placed at the top of the body. It is like an engine of a train that drives the entire train at a speed decided by it. The coaches (all other parts of the body) would be directionless, and must necessarily remain united with it to reach their destination, or perform any worthwhile function along the way. The entire motive force and the motivational energy reside in the brain. Our thoughts, will power, faith and desires that prompt all our action emanate from here and find a final resolution. The decision to perform any act in pursuance of these thoughts and desires is also taken by the brain, on the strength of the power of discrimination.

The reference point for any meaningful life style management must begin and end with the brain, mind and intellect.

We have so far restricted our self to the discussion on the gross aspects of the brains and its functionality, and in that respect, the only remark that can be made is to ensure its absolute health and upkeep. In gross terms one of the possible ways is to keep it well oiled and subject it to regular exercise in the form of head massage. But that care is at best only cosmetic, literally. Let us go a little deeper inside and look for the gross components, if any. As discussed in previous pages, brain has a web of nerves and veins, a few nerve centers and most importantly, billions of nano

particles called neurons. Neurons are extremely small particles invisible to the naked eye but have been duly recognized and computed by the medical and the scientific world.

Neurons play an important role in the performance of all our body functions, including carrying messages from brain to other parts of the body. This they do on the strength of the electrostatic current that constantly flows in our body. These are charged particles and all commands sent by the brain to our muscles and other vital organs to perform their assigned functions, are delivered by them. Neurons are powered by our thoughts. All gross movements in the body like the movements of hands, feet, legs, head or eyes are governed by the movement of neurons which is so fast that it appears almost instinctive.

Our brain or its product, our intellect is the repository of all our thoughts, and we are aware of the fact that these really are our thoughts that drive all our actions. Indeed, it is important to follow that sequel and any action that is not backed up by thought usually, lands us in deep trouble. The placement and configuration of neurons inside our brain, has a symbiotic relationship with the quality and pattern of our thoughts.

The graphic images of person with a disturbed state would be diametrically different from a person with peaceful demeanour. The placement of neurons in the two individuals can be compared with the normal placement of particles in iron and magnet respectively. In case of a piece of iron, all particles are spread unevenly in a random fashion and there is no pattern to their positioning. In fact, they keep moving around in a random manner in all possible directions. Examine a piece of magnet and you will find a system, a pattern that guides and governs their placement

and movement. Particles here are completely aligned in one direction in accordance with their polarity. There is an order in their movement as well.

The graphic image of neurons inside most of us is akin to that of iron. Our thoughts that drive these neurons are far too many, and they occur in a completely haphazard manner. There is no pattern to their entry and exit in our brain, nor is there any coherence. Disjointed thoughts keep driving these neurons in a random fashion and they keep colliding against the walls of our brain, leading to headaches, and in certain serious cases, migraine.

The brain of a person with a peaceful disposition, on contrast is a picture that is comparable to that of a magnet. Those who largely remain in this state develop an aura, a magnetic personality and others in their presence would experience positive vibes. They are indeed, the blessed ones but alas, their number is restricted to a small section of the world.

Another aspect of our brain is the extent of its usage which is reported to be miserably low. One study reveals that majority of human beings in this world do not use more than ten percent of the capacity of their brain power. Rest is either not used at all or is wasted in the whirlpool of crass negativity. We will have an opportunity of detailed discussion on this and related issues, when we look at the subtle aspects of our lifestyle management.

Our brain and more importantly, our intellect is the finest endowment nature has bestowed on us, placing us at the top of the hierarchy of all living beings. It is our most priceless possession and deserves to be used and cared for in a very positive manner.

Interestingly, this is the only asset that improves in quality

with the passage of time and extensive usage. All other gross assets of human body are subject to decay and decline with age.

We use our brain all the time, instinctively, consciously and more than anything, in an automation mode. There is hardly any moment when our brain is not involved in all matters we pursue during the course of our awakened state. In fact, even during our sleep state, our brain is occupied in dreams and is subjected to a stream of a constant thought process. The only time it gets some modicum of rest is during our deep sleep, a phenomenon that is extremely rare. It is unceasingly occupied in thoughts that enter from outside, in speech and in guiding our actions. We keep performing karmas throughout our life and the main entities that are fully involved, are our brain and intellect.

The relevant issue in this regard is not the extent of its usage but the manner of its use and application to various karmas that we perform. We are involved in several tasks and speak many words during the course of the day, and they all have a link with our mind and intellect. What we do is important, but more than that is *how we do* it. It is said that ordinary people do different things and great people do them differently. Actual task is seemingly performed by the body, or by some part of the body, like the hand, eye and vocal chords, but behind all these tasks are our intellect and our thoughts which are the main drivers.

Our existence is largely psychosomatic in nature and so are our problems. Oxford dictionary defines psychosomatic as, 'relating to the relationship between mind and body'. It also defines it as (of mental illness), caused or made worse by a mental factor such as stress.

Almost all problems in our body, relating to health and operational efficiency are caused by mental factors and therefore, are psychosomatic in nature. Some of us refuse to recognize this fact and remain occupied in treating these problems strictly connected with the body and its malfunctioning. In the absence of a proper diagnosis and our refusal to accept anything wrong with our intellect and the quality of thoughts, we keep suffering perennially.

We have seen that almost all our body functions are controlled, indeed dictated by our mind and intellect. Any change, physical or chemical that occurs in the brain will create a corresponding impact on the rest of the body. This will necessarily happen because all our body parts, including all vital organs are connected with the brain through the network of nerves, and these nerves remain perennially alive on account of the current that flows through them constantly. When we experience stress on account of some extreme emotion like fear or work pressure, both physical and chemical changes occur in the body.

Physical changes involve constriction of the nerves reducing their circumference and forcing the neurons to move faster than their normal speed. Vessels that carry blood to different parts of the body also become narrower creating greater resistance to the movement of blood. Tension and stress of any kind creates a condition of hypertension and consequent increase in the blood pressure. Those who are habitually stressed out, or possess such propensities get affected by this syndrome on an acute or chronic basis.

Chemical changes in our body affect the quality of secretions by multiple glands, a process that keeps occurring constantly. A stressed individual would habitually, secrete fluids that are malevolent in nature reducing his levels

of immunity. A person with happy disposition will invariably secrete benevolent ones improving, indeed strengthening his immune system.

Stress as a condition is totally unnecessary and is eminently avoidable. We come under stress largely, on account of our own thoughts and pressure we build up, and that influences our mind and intellect. In a work environment, we fix a deadline or, perhaps the situation demands that it should be completed within the stipulated time. Instead of planning and executing it, we allow stress to build up, jeopardizing its timely completion leading to greater stress. Also, there are situations when we impose these deadlines on our own self, and certain diversions and interruptions that are beyond our control, delay that task. This also leads to an avoidable stress. If for a moment we sit back, and ask our self that if the task is not completed within the time we had set apart for it what will happen? The answer in majority of situations would be that it will not alter anything.

However having said all that about the futility of stress and its deleterious effects, if you can manage and control these conditions and do not allow stress to overtake you, it might turn out to be a blessing in disguise. Stress that remains within your control, can indeed, help in creating the right frame of mind to accomplish what you have set out. It then becomes a strong driver for passion and hard work.

Stress driven by a fully conscious mind in certain ways, is desirable than the one that creeps in unconsciously, and then leads to a psychosomatic state.

Problems such as stiff neck, severe back pain, slip-disc, migraine and most problems in and around the region

of spinal column are purely psychosomatic in nature. In fact all negative emotions like anger, fear, greed and sense of insecurity create similar conditions. They are generated in the brain, affect the mind and intellect which in turn impact the body in an adverse manner. If these emotions keep recurring and assume the status of a habit, it leads to a chronic state.

Barring children who are born with congenital defects, every normal child is a perfectly well designed machine with fresh and healthy parts. They also carry a 'guarantee' of good performance (without any warranty card, of course) for the length of time human beings normally live on this planet. Somewhere down the line and essentially, because of our defective lifestyle and habits, we let this machine down. Apart from regular maintenance which really involves observing a standard protocol of exercise and good dietary habits, many of us seek replacement of parts and tightening of nuts and bolts on a regular basis. This should be done only as a last resort and on certification by the competent advice that the part, sought to be replaced has become defective and can lead to other complications, and under no other condition whatsoever.

The key to our healthy and happy stay, in fact, to our happy and healthy stay on this planet and strictly in that order, lies inside our brain and intellect.

It is evident from above that our state of mind and intellect would play a significant role with respect to our quality of life. We will have to keep performing karmas unceasingly and there never would be any escape from that engagement. How we perform those karmas will be a crucial factor in deciding our quality and course of life. Positive behaviour, optimism, happy and peaceful

disposition, living life in sync with nature and accepting the rewards of our labour without any desire or expectations attached to them, will lead to a healthy brain, mind and intellect and consequently, a very healthy body and spirit. A calm and quiet mind will be full of composure and rationality, and ensure better productivity in all our ventures.

One of the ways to bring about peace and calm to our overworked brain is to set apart just a few moments everyday, say five to ten minutes to start with. Sit with eyes closed and let all your limbs and muscles remain in a relaxed state. Your brain emptied out of all thoughts, shall have to issue commands to that effect to every bone and muscle. Practice it for a few days at a stretch. First few days would be difficult, but if you persevere in your efforts, you will see the difference.

In fact, our body remains stretched and tense in the normal course, and a reminder on the lines suggested above can do wonders to our general health and disposition.

Chapter Seven

AWARENESS—CHETNA

Our discussion on different aspects of lifestyle management was restricted so far to the gross, the body and all that was visible. We are largely body-centric and regard our body as the be all and end all of our existence. We are in many respects obsessed with it, doing everything possible to make it look neat, beautiful and healthy. In fact we work really hard for this purpose and much of what we earn goes into maintaining its upkeep. If we were to analyze, a substantial part of our income is spent on owning a house for a comfortable living, on our food to remain fit, on clothing to protect our self and look good and several peripherals that are meant entirely for the body beautiful. A small part of our income is spent on education and acquisition of knowledge which again prepares us to earn enough for our body and a comfortable living. Our definition of quality of life begins and ends with the level of style and comfort that we can provide to our body.

Our life's ambitions and primary objective also revolve around our body and start with a comfortable existence, and then move towards power, money and recognition. We all want to be happy and tend to believe that if all our worldly desires are fulfilled, we shall be happy. In

reality things never work that way. Against fulfillment of one desire, there are, more than one that are not fulfilled or are only partially fulfilled. Even the one that has been fulfilled leads to a desire for more and its repetition, leaving us perpetually in a state of unhappiness. Ironically, after a while the desire that has been fulfilled does not give us happiness, it is the one that has not been gratified that causes unhappiness. Our state of happiness indeed, remains the function of our desires and their relationship is so strong and evident that it is possible to define it with a mathematical equation as follows:

$$\text{Our happiness quotient} = \frac{\text{No of desires fulfilled}}{\text{No of desires entertained}}$$

We carry several desires in our bosom all the time. Equation above will tell us that if we entertain hundred desires and only ten are fulfilled, our happiness quotient will only be one upon ten. In an unlikely event of all our desires getting fulfilled, we shall be the happiest person. There is one more scenario which helps us to understand this phenomenon in a clear perspective. Supposing we reach a situation where we do not consciously entertain any desires and accept all that comes our way as a blessing. In other words, when the denominator in our equation becomes zero, that is we do not entertain any desires, we are assured of unlimited and infinite happiness. It is well known that in mathematics anything that is divided by zero, leads to infinity. This may not happen in real life with us mortals, but if we adopt a position of relative sanguinity with regard to our material aspirations, we would generally remain in a happy state. This would be a state of *samatva bhav.*

Krishna echoes these views in chapter 2, verse 38:

Sukh Dukhe Same Kritva
Labha Labho Jaya Jayo
Tato Yudhaye Yujasva
Naivam Papam Vapsyasi

"Treat happiness and sorrow, victory and defeat, loss and profit alike and prepare to fight the battles of your life. You will commit no sin".

Reiterating this advice in chapter 4, in verse 22, the Bhagwadgita says:

Yadrichalabh Santushto
Dwandatit Matsaro
Sama Sidha Asidho Cha
Kritvapi Na Nibhadyate

"One who remains content with whatever is received without entertaining any desire, is not touched by a feeling of jealousy, remains equipoise in happiness and sorrow, or loss and gain, does not get into any bondage".

Every living being in this world wants to be happy always, and shudders at the thought of misery or sorrow of any kind. We know that this is not possible. This world, with its strong dual nature, will confer upon all of us moments of happiness and sorrow in proportion to the effects of our karmas. Indeed, the importance of some rare moments of our happiness will diminish, in the absence of sorrow that all of us must experience at some stage of our life.

Kabir, one of the most celebrated saints of the Bhakti moments had another extreme take on this issue:

Dukh Me Simran Sab Kare
Sukh Me Kare Na Koi
Jo Sukh Me Simran Kare
To Dukh Kahe Ko Hoi

"Everyone remembers the Lord in time of sorrow and no one does it in the state of happiness. If you remember Him always, including during the days of happiness then you will not be affected by misery".

He further added:

Sukh Ke Mathe Sil Pade
Jo Ram Hriday Se Jaye
Balihari Main Dukh Ke
Jo Palpal Ram Rataye

"I do not want happiness that takes me away from my God. I would rather be unhappy that makes me remember Him always".

These of course, are the emotions and voices of saints commenting on the positive aspects of our perceptions of difficult times, and how these can be converted into a positive behaviour. It may not be easy to comprehend the profundity of these statements, but an awareness that happy days will not remain our life long companions, nor will days of sorrow trouble us for ever, is a useful and an integral part of our lifestyle management. This will ensure that we enjoy good time while it lasts and go through difficult times with relative sanguinity, if not aplomb.

An intelligent comparison between the conditions of happiness and those of sorrow, of success and failure, will however, tell us that after all sorrow and failure are not such bad things to happen, once in a while. Experience of happiness becomes a matter of greater joy after a period of misery. But even otherwise, sorrow and failure as standalone emotions have a positive spin-off. Those who are happy and successful tend to stagnate, become complacent and seldom make any great efforts to move forward. Failure can be a big learning experience and if

you do not let yourself down completely, it can make you leap far ahead of those perceived to be highly successful.

It is also important not to hypothecate our state of happiness to any reason. We often remark that we are happy because a favourable event has happened. Does it mean that if it did not happen I would be miserable. Secondly, if events that are consistent with your desire do happen but do not last long enough, will you be unhappy?

Do not be happy because of a reason, because if that reason does not last long, and in majority of cases it would not, it will lead to unhappiness that may be more unbearable than the happiness you got out of it.

Another important factor that we must remember is that happiness does not lie in the object that we pursued and acquired. That object or the objective is neutral and has no emotional content. Happiness lies within you and that can stay inside you independent of external causes of gratification.

As mentioned earlier, happy days do not last very long in the lives of an individual and invariably, some nights of sorrow will inevitably affect everybody. We therefore need to seek the next level of emotional state that must necessarily lasts longer and make us relatively immune to the vicissitudes of life. Can it be the state of peace and contentment and if yes, how does one attain to it?

The Bhagwadgita tenders the following advice contained in verse 71 of chapter 2:

Vihaye Kaman Ya Sarvan
Puman Charti Nispriha
Nirmamo Nirhankar
Sa Shantim Adhigachati

"A person who is free of all desires of sense

gratification, of any proprietorship and has conquered his ego, alone can attain a state of permanent peace".

A person in a state of permanent peace within himself seldom gets affected by the highs and lows of life that must inevitably impact him.

Treating our self as something more than a mere gross body, desires, material aspirations, sorrow and happiness, attainment of peace and adopting a rational stance towards all these and other related emotions, calls for deep sense of awareness. This is where the actual realization of *'who we are'* comes in.

'Know thyself' the oft-repeated Biblical edict makes it obligatory on all living beings to perform due diligence and search our true identity. If our true identity was only a gross body, the Bible or other scriptures of different spiritual thoughts would not have repeated them *ad-nauseam.* The body is obvious and can be seen, dissected and analyzed by any scientist or a surgeon trained in this art. It definitely has to be much more than what meets the eye, and to make a worthwhile comment on lifestyle management in a holistic sense, we must know its true identity.

Krishna and His most celebrated work the Gita, again guides us on the discovery of this esoteric entity, the self.

In chapter 10, Krishna is trying to explain to Arjuna His own true identity and His true representations amongst different creations in the universe. He is evidently 'the best' amongst the class of people and the entities that He is describing. Krishna's intention is to disabuse the mind of Arjuna from his impression of Krishna, as any other mortal being and convey to him by examples, His true identity as Supreme energy controlling the entire universe. At verse 22, in the same chapter, He says:

Vedanam Samvedosmi
Devanam Asmi Vasava
Indriyanam Manchasmi
Bhutanam Asmi Chetna

"I am Samved amongst the Vedas, amongst the gods I am Indra, mind amongst the senses and awareness (Chetna) amongst human beings".

Krishna, the Supreme energy the God, proclaims Himself as awareness amongst human beings. Translated into simple message, if you know your true self you actually get to know Him. Ironically however, that is perhaps the most difficult thing that happens with only few of us. For instance, in real sense the only person who is strategically positioned to know you completely is you. Again, the only person who is privy to you, your thoughts, all your spoken words and all your actions has to be you. Some of those who are close to you may know what you may have said and done, but they will not be privy to, all of them. In other words, you are the only one who is supposed to know everything about yourself. Here is the biggest paradox of our life. We usually are the last to know about our self, not because we cannot, but because we do not accept what others tell us and our ego refuses to acknowledge anything amiss. Also we are convinced that we can never do anything wrong because that is how we have been doing it and that indeed, is the best way. What is wrong invariably belongs to others and in our own wisdom, is best reserved for them. This we do primarily because of our inherent nature and we believe that there is nothing wrong in it.

One of the greatest challenges we face in our interpersonal relationship is to acknowledge that others can be, and do things better than us. This often leads to a delusional understanding of the self.

In this context, it may be worthwhile to look at the following two verses from the Gita.

First, at verse 40 of chapter 18, and then at verse 33 of chapter 3, which read as follow:

Na Tadasti Prithivyam Va
Divi Deveshu Va Puna
Satvam Prakriti Jairmuktam
Yadebhi Syat Tribhirgune

"No one including the gods and goddesses in this universe is free of any of the three Gunas prevalent in nature".

These Gunas are satvik, rajsik and tamsik which in simple words translate into attributes that are of pure, mixed and evil nature. All of us possess streaks of good, bad and evil in different proportions and prevalence of one accords us the general recognition in the society to which we belong.

Sadrisham Cheshte Swasya
Prakrite Gyan Van Api
Prakritam Yanti Bhutani
Nigraha Kim Karishyati

"Everyone, including the wise one acts according to their nature. There is no point in suppressing our natural instincts and tendencies".

It is difficult to disagree with this statement easily. Our nature which is really a product of our karmas spread over a long period, indeed several births, does not change easily, unless we seek true understanding of the self and consciously try and make corrections, truly a Herculean task. Our elephantine ego is the biggest hurdle in seeking any change. Indeed, this is how we have evolved and this is how the entire living organism has evolved over several

centuries. Take the case of animals where a lion or a predator will necessarily kill to survive, and we do not find anything wrong in it. Try and persuade a lion, shower all the love or force at your command, he will not give up killing. Similarly, tell a person with evil propensities to start doing good deeds and you may see another act of evil nature being performed right in front of you. However, committing evil deeds all the time is not his true nature and there is a possibility that he may change, provided he goes through a catharsis or an event of great significance takes place in his life that makes him sit up and think.

This is where the importance of awareness comes in and that alone can present to us our true picture with a clean mirror in front, truly reflect what we keep doing, how we do them and our ultimate objective of life. Man's true nature is not to kill, like that of a lion, nor is it to speak lies, cheat or hurt others. Man's true nature is to love, to have faith, to serve those in need and seek true realization of self, with an ultimate intention of merging with his source, the Supreme energy. This awareness will not come, so long as we treat our self as a gross body that needs comfort and all the luxuries without actually deserving them. That will also not come, as long as we remain afflicted with desire for material aspirations, and our mind and intellect will remain perpetually occupied in devising ways and means to achieve them. It definitely, will not bring about any positive changes, unless we find time to spend with our own self, reflect on our true nature, accept several digressions in them and make a conscious endeavour to correct them. This again re-emphasizes the importance of awareness in our life.

Let us examine what all a conscious awareness can do in improving our lifestyle. Apart from facilitating and

presenting a true picture of our self, it can do wonders to the manner in which we live our life, in boosting our productivity levels, in improving our knowledge and focus and above all, preparing us to take responsibility for all our actions.

It will be useful to illustrate it with an example.

In the course of our daily routine, we perform several tasks and we often do them in an automation mode. While doing a particular task we are thinking about the next one or something else which is completely unrelated. There is no focus on the task at hand and we perform it either perfunctorily or mess it up. Take for example, a simple act of drinking water. While drinking from a glass of water, I have to rush to do something very important and I decide to put down the glass on a table. My mind is occupied with the urgent task that I have suddenly remembered, and I am not aware of the act of placing the glass on the table. In some cases, the glass would not rest on the table cleanly. Water would spill over and the glass may break, requiring me to postpone attention on the urgent task, and force me to waste my time on clearing the mess. Unawareness will inevitably, tie me down to the result of my actions. My awareness in performing every task properly will free me from anything that may follow, and I move on to the next task.

Awareness signifies complete freedom.

While performing karmas that involve thought, speech and action, our awareness will ensure that we perform them with complete knowledge of its consequences. Every task will, necessarily lead to some result or reaction, and only we have to take responsibility of its result, any which way. Our state of awareness will help us to remain prepared

for the consequences and accept them without any hesitation or complaint. When we perform any action which is against our normal nature, we move from a state of awareness to that of unawareness, and then tend to blame others for the results that are not agreeable to us.

Awareness creates a sense of responsibility.

All of us remain engaged in work throughout our life and we do it for a variety of reasons. Some works are common to all of us and there are many that are peculiar to our station in life. All work will not lead to the desired results. There would be gain in some, and loss in others. We will fail sometime and, will surely succeed in our efforts at some other occasions. While success will bring joy, it is only our awareness that will prevent us from sulking or complaining in the event of a failure. Indeed, our awareness will make us humble in victory and graceful in defeat.

Awareness brings in sagacity and equanimity.

In performance of any task, the importance of focus, concentration and single minded devotion cannot be overemphasized. These are factors that not only help us to take the task to its logical conclusion, it also ensures that we achieve it with a degree of excellence. Awareness brings in imagination and we learn to perform all our tasks in a variety of ways generating versatility.

Awareness increases our productivity and gives spark to our imagination.

Absence of awareness on the other hand, adds no value and we actually end up wasting our time and energy in pursuing that task. Some of us traditionally spend couple of hours doing Puja (worship) every morning in a small

temple that we have fondly set up in a neat corner of our household. While performing elaborate rituals of washing and adorning the deity, lighting incense sticks and a lamp, we invariably think of all other things that we are required to do except the worship that we are supposed to perform. We shout at our servant and issue instructions of all kinds and do everything else, completely unrelated to the act of worship. Where is our awareness all this while? We are actually wasting our time which can perhaps be profitably utilized elsewhere.

Lack of awareness leads to complete wastage of time and energy.

Interestingly, there is a particular sect in India that defines 'karma' as an act performed in the state of unawareness, and 'non-karma' as something that we do in the state of awareness. This is absolutely contrary to the classical definition of karma and non karma. The difference between the enlightened and the ignorant lies not in the type of work done but the way that work is executed, with awareness or without awareness. This difference will set apart the intelligent from the unintelligent.

The commonly understood definition of karma is to do something, whereas, non karma is not to do anything. The enlightened definition however, is that everything done in a mechanical manner or in a state of unawareness is karma and that, inevitably results in a bondage. Those who perform all their tasks in a state of awareness remain free of such fetters.

Awareness leads to freedom and those who on the strength of belief, determination and long practice stay in that state permanently, experience a leap of faith and succeed in breaking all the shackles imposed by the self

and society. Their identification with the self and the ephemeral nature of their corporeal existence makes them dedicate all their karmas to the Master of universe. It is important to understand that a person in a state of awareness does not renounce work. In fact, he works with much greater dedication and focus, leading to better output. He only renounces any sense of attachment to the work or the result thereof. This mindset creates enormous freedom for him in the sense of not getting affected by it, and maintaining what is described as a *samatva bhav.*

These views are echoed by Krishna in verse 28 of chapter 9 of the Bhagwadgita as follows:

Shubhashubfale Aivam
Mokshyase Karambandhane
Sanyas Yog Yuktatma
Vimukta Mam Upeshyasi

"One who dedicates all his karmas to Me and remains non-attached to worldly objects, becomes completely free from the good or evil effects of karmas and readily attains Me".

State of awareness is not limited to alertness, focus or performance of our karmas with detachment. It indeed, opens up our horizon of knowledge and helps us to comprehend the true purpose of our life, objectives and how to achieve them. In other words, awareness impacts our lifestyle as no other factor does and it does it comprehensively.

Freedom is the most valuable possession that all human beings have cherished since times immemorial. Those who remain unaware and ignorant are perpetually chained to this world, to its ephemeral and transient materialism and never ever understand their own true self, leave alone, the phenomena that is outside of them.

Remaining in the state of awareness will qualitatively improve our lifestyle, and will literally and metaphorically, bring down our excess baggage that we carry in our life, from beginning to the end.

One of the interesting ways to remain in a state of awareness is to periodically engage ourselves in a conversation with the self. An honest appraisal of our own strength and weaknesses and their acceptance will generate enormous amount of peace within and raise the bar of our performance.

Chapter Eight

LIFE IS ABOUT CHOICES MADE

Amongst all living beings, human beings are the finest creation of nature in respect to the sum total of attributes conferred upon them. In previous chapters we discussed largely, the gross part of his being, his body which has been designed to function as the finest machine anybody can imagine with practically all parts assigned with specific tasks. Majority of body function are performed in an automation mode and we really do not need to make any special efforts to discharge them. Observing some basic rules, exercising in a modest way, imbibing air, water and food in optimum measure is enough to facilitate our journey from birth to death without any extraordinary effort. However, no two human beings are identical, and each one chooses to live his own life, the way he decides as most appropriate.

We live our life on the basis of conscious choices we make, and this has an important bearing on the issue of our lifestyle management.

Choices that we make are usually dictated by our inherent nature, and our mind and intellect play a dominant role in making them. Each one of us possesses what is loosely described as individual nature evidenced by our habits,

tendencies, speech and actions that we perform. We also make our place in a society by these factors and are generally recognized by them in our social interactions. Our tentative introduction may be given by our family name but the impression and perception others have of us is governed by our karmas that include our thoughts, speech and actions. Here also our thoughts are hidden and in effect our spoken words, manner of speech and our overt actions play a critical role. We need to therefore add one more dimension to our lifestyle.

The choices we make, the karmas we perform and the manner in which we perform them has an impact on our lifestyle and its management.

We move from the gross to the subtle aspects of our existence which influence our life in a much stronger way. Physiologically or on the gross plane, all of us are more or less identical and as a race, have evolved in a uniform manner. It is the psychological state that is unique to each one of us and poses a greater challenge in devising the ideal state of our lifestyle. The body plays a subservient role and our emotional state, mind and intellect takes over a dominant role in deciding the course of our life. The subtle aspect of a human being influences his interaction at two distinct levels. One that is entirely and exclusively linked to his own self, and another which guides his interaction with everything that is outside of his being. The external environment will have a huge impact on us and it is our reaction to multiple layers that any situation will project that will guide our life's journey.

Both these influences are equally important and have a close bearing on his lifestyle. Ideally, a proper synthesis between the inside and outside will ensure an absolutely smooth journey of his life and that is indeed, described

as living a life like a yogi. Let us list out the factors and entities that he has to deal with, as he traverses his life's path.

1. The external environment in broad general terms.
2. The plants, trees and all other vegetation.
3. The animal world, including the wild and domesticated species.
4. All nature's creation including, those that generate awe and wonder.
5. All celestial bodies like the sun, moon and all other stars in the constellation.
6. His immediate environment, his family, friends, relatives and other associations.
7. The entire human world either personally known or not known to him.
8. Above all, he himself with his desires, nature and objectives of life.

This list is only illustrative and there would be many more entities that impact his life and its style, and have to be reckoned with in determining the subtle part of his being. Every human being is an island and, an integral part of this universe at the same time. There is not a single moment of his existence when he can stay without work or in a larger sense without performing karma, and in that context he will either impact the external environment or get affected by it or perhaps, both phenomena will occur almost simultaneously. A good lifestyle management shall, necessarily have to look at all these factors and delineate his actions, reactions, conduct and behaviour in a holistic manner. Interestingly, the impact of some of the factors listed above would be on predictable lines, but there also would be several imponderables and unforeseen situations,

and he shall have to equip himself to deal with all of them with aplomb. As we go along in our life's journey there are several opportunities and options that are thrown open to us, and we are called upon to make choices. The important point to remember is that while making a particular choice and acting in pursuance of it, we should be fully aware of its consequences. There is no alibi of ignorance or lack of knowledge of the result of that choice, and this is where the importance of awareness comes in that has been dealt with extensively in the previous chapter.

Our lifestyle management must give due recognition to the principles of Karmic philosophy, where one notices a convergence of science and spirituality. The intention here is not to enter into any debate on the conflicts or similarities between spirituality and science, but to look at a space that brings both of them on a common platform. We must accept that there exists adequate space for accommodating both. While science deals exclusively with issues that can be experienced by our senses and intellect, spiritual tenets are passed on to us on the basis of experience and perceptive knowledge of the enlightened ones, and are no less than real life phenomena that occur in our life. Faith, a standard attribute of spiritual thought in a way, is a crystallized rationality seen and observed by many wise people down the ages.

However, we shall confine ourselves to the area of complete convergence between the two streams. Karmic philosophy insists that everyone in this world has to bear the fruits of his karmas, and that no one can escape the effects which must catch up with him sooner or later. In other words, whatever happens to you is linked with the effects of your karmas. Putting it other way round, nothing happens to you which cannot be traced back to your karmas.

Science also makes the same statement, albeit words it differently, but the implications are exactly identical. It says, 'To every action, there is equal and opposite reaction'. This statement completely coincides with the substance of the karmic philosophy. The emphasis on 'equal' and 'opposite' is also noteworthy and indeed, underscores the direct nexus between the executor of the karma and the recipient of the result. Conscious of this truth, it is only prudent for each one of us to make such choices with respect to karmas that will cause results that are agreeable, and are in our interest. They should also be consistent with our life's objectives and help us move forward. Choices we make should be in keeping with the laws of nature and of course, of the society.

There is one more factor that must govern the choice of our karmas and their performance, and is linked strictly to a fundamental human approach. We may perform all karmas that are sanctioned by any progressive society and alternatively, should not perform any such acts which we shall disapprove, if others were doing them. There cannot be two different yardsticks for two different people and freedom of making choices is available to all in equal measures.

This universe operates on the principles of duality and metaphorically, there is a thin line that divides the two, like the two sides of a coin. The two sides exist in tandem and run parallel to each other like the railway tracks. There is male and female, yin and yang, positive and negative, sorrow and happiness, et al. One can keep on adding to the list of these opposites and that will really define all the phenomena that take place in this universe, inexorably. In fact, if there is anything that claims to exist without its opposite counterpart, it can be safely dismissed as fake.

The only entity that is non-dual in nature and substance is the Supreme God and He is one completely, unified singular reality.

We all carry several emotions, desires, sentiments and have varied ways of expressing them. Majority of them in some sense, are related to our material aspirations. Human beings are also endowed with a phenomenon called dreaming which is peculiar to the human race, and this leads him to all situations that can physically exist in this universe. Our dreams usually are a product of an interaction between our sub-conscious and real life incidents, and can range from being very pedestrian to absolutely weird. They also generate certain desires in us that propel us to resort to means that may not be strictly ethical, and may sometimes affect our choices. We need to guard against such phenomena.

With this general backdrop, let us look at some of the qualities/attributes each one of us must consider while making informed and intelligent choices that we make in life. The possession of mind and intellect, albeit in varying degrees, and our sense of discrimination will not allow us to make a plea of innocence, or ignorance of the consequences of our choices with respect to karmas. The Bhagwadgita in chapter 16, in verses 1, 2 and 3 lists out some dos and don'ts for an ideal human being, and I would reckon that these would guide us effectively, in search of a good lifestyle management.

Abhyam Satvam Sanshudhi
Gyan Yog Vyavasthiti
Danam Damasch Yagyasch
Swadhya Tap Arjvam *Ch. 16, V. 1*

Ahimsa Satyam Krodhastyag
Shanti Apaishunam
Daya Bhuteshu Aloluptvam
Mardvam Hrir Chaplam *Ch. 16, V. 2*

Tej Khshama Dhriti Shoucham
Droho Natimanita
Bhavanti Sampdam Devim
Abhijatsya Bharata *Ch. 16, V. 3*

Krishna, in these three verses very comprehensively describes the characteristics and qualities of the blessed ones. These are twenty six in numbers, and it would be worthwhile to discuss their true import.

Absence of fear,
Purity of heart and mind,
Installing one's mind and intellect in realization of God, the truth,
Charity to the deserving,
Adequate control on one's senses,
Performance of good deeds and engagement in worship,
Study of scriptures and fine literature,
Performance of hard and arduous work,
Simplicity of thoughts and actions,
Observe non-violence in deeds, and speech and never hurt anyone,
Speaking the truth always,
Complete absence of anger even on those who may have damaged you,
Detachment from the ownership of all tasks,
Peace and stability,
Not condemn or criticize anybody,

Compassion for all living entities,
Sense involvement without any attachment,
Softness in speech and feelings,
Abstain from doing wrongful acts,
Avoidance of futile engagements,
To be a source of inspiration for others,
Forgiveness even to the enemies,
Courage and fortitude,
Observance of hygiene and cleanliness,
Possess no enmity and envy for anyone,
Shed arrogance and immodesty, have no expectation of honour or recognition.

In verse 4 of the same chapter, Krishna mentions the attributes of person with a demonic nature as follows:

Dambh Darp Abhiman Cha
Krodh Parushyam Cha
Agyanam Cha Abhijatasya
Parth Sampdam Asurim

"Pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance are the characteristics of a person who possesses a devilish nature".

A perusal of these two sets of attributes will give us a peep into the mindsets of two persons with highly contrasting qualities and behaviour. My guess is that it is highly improbable, if not impossible to find all of them (good or the evil) in one person at a given point of time. Most of us possess a varied mix of the two and that might also change at different stages of our life. Two persons will stand apart only account of prevalence of one set of qualities vis-à-vis another set, and his general reputation is built around that perception.

However, all these qualities conditioned by our general

nature and a product of our mind and intellect impact us, and all those that we come in contact with in a subtle way. These therefore, are linked with our lifestyle management very intimately.

Human intellect is a very powerful and a complex entity, but our lifestyle turns it into a weak instrument and further complicates its complex content. Hundreds of thoughts that enter and exit our mind in the course of a few moments, prevent our focus on work, thus reducing our productivity. We carry such a lot of excess baggage on our weak shoulders that they always appear slumped on the edges. Most of us live either, in the past brooding over it, or in the future in a mode of anticipatory fear. In that process, the present slips through the space in our fingers like sand.

This is where our thought, the most powerful entity, plays the most important role in shaping our personality and impacting our lifestyle in the most subtle ways.

All emotions, positive or negative that we experience and exhibit, are the functions of our thought, and are controlled by our intellect. This is where much of our life related action lies, and this is where we need to look carefully at the anatomy of our thoughts and see if we can bring some control, sift positive from the negative, good from evil and improve upon our lifestyle management in a holistic sense.

It is also relevant to underscore the importance of our intellectual endowments. To run through the course of our life in a reasonably comfortable way, we primarily have four distinct entities bestowed upon us by nature. These are senses, mind, intellect and ego. Soul the fifth entity, though an integral part of our being is only a witness and does not participate in any of our karmas. We will leave that alone for the moment. Out of these four entities,

our intellect is our biggest ally and the rest are either unstable or vacillating, and cannot be fully depended upon to guide us on the path of absolute righteousness.

Our senses are always outward bound, looking for comfort, taste, pleasure, nice flavours and all the good things of life.

Our mind is full of desires and emotions, and for those of us deeply entrenched in the material world, our mind gets really weak in the knees and surrenders completely against the onslaught of senses.

Our ego creates more problems than it solves. It is a kind of necessary evil and more often than not, impacts our lifestyle in a negative way, if at all.

These three entities obviously, are an integral part of our being and their overwhelming presence in our life cannot be wished away. They however, need guidance that can be provided only by our intellect, which amongst other attributes is invested with the power of discrimination. For example, emotions like anger, avarice and envy, to name a few that have their origin in our mind egged on by our senses can be controlled only by our intellect.

The first requirement of a good lifestyle management is our reference to, and dependence on our intellect. We will have to consciously practice that and shall see its positive impact, before long.

Our attitude towards others and life in general, our mindset, our behaviour, conduct and the emotions that affect us, play a vital role in shaping our life. The most important aspect of managing our lifestyle really begins with 'managing the self' and making the right and informal choices. If we can remain aware and guide every step that we take, we would conquer the self and in that process, conquer the world.

Chapter Nine

MANAGING THE SUBTLE

While every individual has the potential to reach great heights in his respective area of activity, it is extremely important to do so on the basis of one's own strengths and the courage of one's own convictions and not ride on the bandwagon driven and played by others. Most of us are overly stuffed with material aspirations and want the world for ourselves and our near and dear ones. It is important to seek a balance between the material and spiritual, inside and outside, the gross and the subtle and create a situation of peace and harmony all around. Performance of good karmas must get the highest priority in our scheme of things, and we must always show an eagerness to give more than what we take from others. We must also be aware that we owe a debt to nature that provides for our sustenance and leave this world a better place to live in.

In order to act and conduct ourselves in this manner, certain basic issues need to be understood. The most important of all is to establish our reputation as good human beings. Being good is a very simple and a common phrase, extensively used by practically everyone in this world. Interestingly, while we expect everyone to be good to us,

we are a little slow when it comes to us being good to others. There are certain imperatives that we need to remember and these can go a long way in establishing our reputation as good human beings, and commanding respect from our friends and colleagues. Goodness comes in a variety of ways and must surely become a habit. It could be an act of unsolicited kindness, helping an old man cross a street, preventing children from hitting a street dog or just looking happy and meeting everyone with a smile. A good human being also spreads happiness all around. Goodness is intrinsic and is not a superficial syndrome.

If one looks around, one would come across people from different walks of life who achieve extraordinary things. There are people in all fields of human endeavour who have reached excellence and earned fame and glory. We have not seen the end of this constant effort to improve, by raising the bar higher. In future as well, human beings will continue to excel each other in all disciplines of human endeavour. A similar resolve is called for in the area of goodness, an endeavour which should be accorded as important a premium as any other discipline of human activity. It is not easy to reach a level of absolute goodness, and indeed it is much more difficult to remain good always to everyone with absolute consistency, and appear to be good as well. All of us, including the society, must consciously accord higher place to goodness vis-à-vis success.

Conquering Mount Everest is difficult and calls for grit and determination, but it is a one-time effort. Conquering yourself and your elephantine ego, and exhibiting goodness and good behaviour to all without exception, perhaps, requires greater effort of mind and matter. In fact it requires great strength of character and certain attributes, some

of which are listed below. Of course, this is just illustrative and only a good starting point, in our endeavour to become good human beings.

There is a symbiotic relationship between our lifestyle management and our objective, or objectives in life. I know very few people in this world who would willingly deny themselves, a happy and comfortable living for self and those who are dependent on them. We must remember that material prosperity may ensure to some, a life of comfort but happiness is not a tradable commodity and will elude you if you remain perpetually in the material world and seek no spiritual connections. A big house to live in with a bevy of helpers to attend to your basic needs, delicious food, expensive wardrobe and lots of power and fame does not by themselves assure happiness. You have to search for that elusive happiness from within, stick to certain basic values and truths to get it, and keep it with you for a long while.

In addition to a happy and a comfortable existence, many of us are hungry for power, fame and glory.

There are some who nurture ambitions of becoming a powerful leader. These could be in the fields of politics, religion or for any other worthwhile cause.

There are some who wish to seek excellence in a particular field of human activity that may or may not create great value and benefit for people at large.

There are people who want to spend and dedicate their life in the service of humanity and want nothing in return.

A very small proportion of people, who realize that the material world in every form is a mirage and ephemeral, pursue the spiritual path, either by renouncing the world or by leading their life in a detached manner.

In order to understand and select one's true calling in life, one of course, has to listen to the voice of reason, but more important than that is to listen to the voice of our inner consciousness. That voice will reverberate in our intellect only when we have succeeded in silencing all other disturbing sounds that keep hitting our consciousness perennially. This is where the importance of contemplation and meditation that transcend all other voices comes in. We may refer to this as *'Dhyanyog'* which really must begin with the time that we spend with the self. In our daily life, how many of us do that and how much? *Dhyan* or meditation has been given a pride of place in The Gita. In chapter 12, verse 12, Krishna says:

Shreyo Hi Gyanam Abhyasat
Gyanat Dhyanam Vishishyate
Dhyanat Karamphaltyag
Tyagat Shanti Anantram

"Knowledge is better than practice, mediation is superior to knowledge, giving up rewards of one's karma is superior to meditation, because renunciation leads to permanent peace and bliss".

Regular practice of meditation and spending quality time with the self and within self brings awareness. It helps us to make an intelligent choice of our karmas, evaluate them and creates positive energy all around.

1. Nature has created everyone as equal and indeed, treats every one as equal and so should we.
2. Our material aspirations do not leave us till the last breath. We need to create a balance between our worldly desires, basic needs and spiritual calling.

The Bhagwadgita in chapter 16, verse 21 says:

Trividham Narkasya Idam
Dwaram Nashanam Atmana
Kam Krodha Tatha Lobha
Tasmat Aitat Tryam Tyajet

"Lust, anger and greed are three doors to hell and also degrade our soul. One should therefore, abandon them completely".

3. Anger which primarily explodes because of non-fulfillment of our worldly desires *must be completely removed out of our system.*
4. Let us lead our life on the basis of our basic needs and *jettison greed or avarice completely.*
5. Jealousy undermines our position and damages our reputation beyond repair. *Let us consciously replace this emotion with love for everybody.*
6. Performance of all karmas will bring rewards only for you. The good and evil will bring in corresponding results only to you. *Do not ever put the blame for your actions on others.* While happiness they bring in will make you humble, adversity will give you a diagnostic awareness of the causes (your own karmas) and give you the strength to bear it with a smile.
7. It is important to understand one's Dharma and perform it with firm determination. Also, one must be absolutely sure of what one wants, and be decisive about it, of course in an ethical way.
8. Forgiving others is the most magnanimous gesture one makes in life. Show yourself as a well-wisher and be ready and willing to forget and forgive even your enemies.
9. Common prudence dictates that we should concern ourselves with something that is within our control.

All karmas that we perform fall in that category. Doing something, as a reaction to the karmas performed by others invites avoidable problems. Strictly follow your action regimen and try and avoid any reactionary tendencies.

10. Cheerfulness is the first sign of a noble soul. It adds to your attractiveness and improves your physical and intellectual well-being. Exude warmth and affection for everyone and consciously avoid any feeling of hatred.
11. It is important to feel happy within. This will ensure a perpetual smile on your face and that will literally enhance your face value.
12. It is extremely important to be honest, and show great sense of intellectual honesty in all your dealings.
13. Have the courage of your own convictions, and do not borrow it from others.
14. Simplicity is the hallmark of all great people. Let us consciously live our life in as simple a manner as possible.
15. All of us are essentially spiritual beings, and an integral part of the grand design of nature. God or some Supreme force controls and operates this huge property called universe. Those fond of reading must set apart some time for the study of the spiritual texts. Even if you find it uninteresting in the beginning, it will give you a peep into your real self and guide you on the path of righteousness.
16. We perform our karmas through thoughts, speech and actions. None of these faculties should be used to hurt anybody.
17. Modesty combined with humility is a great virtue. It is important not to claim ownership of any task or

the result thereof. *'Naiv kinchit karomi iti' (I do not do anything)* is the mantra of success that has its own rewards.

18. One must consciously avoid blaming and criticizing others just for the sake of it.
19. A compassionate heart, soft feeling for others and mercy for the entire nature's creation are all hallmarks of a good human being.
20. Refrain from being judgemental about others and do not rush to from an opinion.
21. Indulgence in futile exercise, craving for attention and recognition must be strictly avoided.
22. It is essential to work on building our memory. It is advisable also to consciously create selective amnesia.

Let us deal with these issues sequentially.

1. God has made everyone as equal and treats them the same way. Let us also learn to treat everyone as equal.

The Bhagwadgita in chapter 13 vide verse 27 and 28 makes an unambiguous statement about the equality of all beings, and adds further that God resides in every human being without exception. In other words, all of us are His manifestation and He treats everyone as equal.

Samam Sarveshu Bhuteshu
Tishtantam Parmeshwaram
Vinashyatsu Avinashyantam
Ya Pashyati Sa Pashyati

"One who looks upon God as an immortal entity, residing equally even amongst all mortal beings possesses correct understanding".

Samam Pashyan Hi Sarvatra
Samvasthitam Ishwaram
Na Hinasti Atmana Atmanam
Tata Yati Param Gatim

"One who believes God to be present everywhere and in every being, never degrades himself. He is in a position to reach his ultimate destination very easily".

Let us gracefully and unreservedly accept the fact, that all human beings in this world are absolutely equal. Each one of us has identical physical endowments. Physiologically speaking, the entire human race is similar. If that were not so, the task of doctors and physicians the world over would become extremely difficult. And this is true, regardless of their place of birth, nationality, colour of their skin, and caste or class. The reproductive cycle of all humans is the same. Emotionally as well (with a few cultural differences) all human beings largely exhibit similar traits and feelings in similar situations, all over the world. All mothers love and protect their children with the same ardour, and in case of an external threat, protect their offspring with the same tenderness and commitment.

Indeed if one was to generalize, it can be safely stated that all human beings, would show similar emotional reactions in similar situations under the same stimuli. The intensity of their reaction could vary, on account of their dissimilar cultures, but the emotional content of their reaction would be the same. We do hear about several incidents of discrimination between different sections of society, but these are incidents of sporadic human aberrations that take place, largely, on account of socio-economic reasons and have nothing to do with normal

human behaviour, which is pretty sanguine about these matters.

This noble thought is entirely endorsed and, indeed further reinforced by spiritual precept. Nature treats everyone as equal. All natural phenomena that take place in any part of the world, affect every person equally. The sun, the moon, and the rainfall, fall as much on the roof of a rich man, as they do on the house of the poor. Earthquakes or a volcano will devour anyone within their area of impact, regardless of a person's colour or nationality.

The Bhagwadgita says:

Yo Mam Pashayati Sarvatra
Sarvam Cha Mayi Paashayati
Tasayaham Na Pranashayami
Sa Cha Me Na Pranashayati

"Whoever sees me everywhere and everyone in me in equal measure, not only is very dear to me, but remains unvanquished forever".

If you wish to understand a person's worth as a good human being, observe the way he treats or interacts with people who are socially and economically inferior to him. A truly good human being will not be rude to them and keep his relationship with everyone on an even keel and treat everybody the same way. Absence of equality and treatment of different classes or classes of people as equal has been the root cause of several adverse situations, in different parts of the world. One particular group, which has a distinct identity based on sex, caste, creed or colour of the skin, tries to subjugate the other on the ground of being superior. The men folk suppress the women, the strong rule over the weak and the rich lord over the poor. This phenomenon is responsible for several conflicts amongst nations, societies

and fellow human beings. Not that it has ended; indeed, wherever there is an opportunity, the strong continue to exploit the weak for their personal interests, leading to conflicts and violence.

The British rule in India was witness to large-scale inequalities being practiced at different levels. Not only did the Englishmen create separate residential colonies for themselves where Indians were forbidden, they even built separate roads at a higher level where no locals were allowed. The famous incident in South Africa where Mahatma Gandhi was thrown out of a train, because he was travelling in a first class compartment reserved for whites, is an example. Of course, that gave birth to his resolve to throw the Englishmen out of India by the famous non-violence movement that has been duly recorded in history. This movement was used as a benchmark by many nations and groups the world over for fighting oppression and injustice. The flip side of such a phenomenon is that when it crosses the threshold of tolerance, it often leads to something extraordinary, benefiting exactly the same class that has been discriminated against. The British rule in India, is indeed replete with stories of oppression and atrocities, perpetrated on the local residents, and it reached such pernicious levels that some of the positive aspects of their reign were forgotten, and the entire nation rose in revolt to drive away the British from the Indian soil. This led to much sought after freedom for the country that was reeling under foreign rule and oppression for several centuries, starting with the Mughal dynasty since sixteenth century.

Unfortunately, even some of the religious places in the world are also not free from this syndrome. We all know that God belongs to everyone in this world and is not

partial to anyone and, yet, some of those who manage God and his abode refuse entry to a section of people in places of worship. Inequalities of any kind, apart from perpetuating poverty, go against the principles of human dignity.

The important point that needs to be emphasized here is that we must necessarily create equal opportunities for everybody in society, and leave it to the individual's capacity and hard work to achieve excellence. This model is being adopted by all civilized societies in their law books, but when it comes to its observance in practice, it leaves much to be desired.

It is equally important to compensate those sections of society that have been discriminated against for centuries. Every civilized nation should make a conscious attempt to bring the hitherto deprived sections into the mainstream and create conditions that are conducive to their equitable growth, along with those who have for years enjoyed these benefits. Equality and equal opportunities should not remain a mere platitude.

Let us gracefully accept the fact, that a certain class of people, have received short shrift, and we owe them a debt that can only be discharged by giving them certain opportunities over and above those others have been getting. For how long that should continue, is a matter of detail and can be resolved. But they definitely deserve a special dispensation till desirable levels of equality are achieved. It is true that there are a few voices of dissent on this dispensation, but the concept of equality cannot be compromised at the whims of certain sections, that are in favour of continuing such inequalities in their personal interest. They need to gracefully abandon their false notion of superiority.

2. Our material aspirations create an unbreakable bondage and it becomes extremely difficult to break these shackles. We need to create a balance between our worldly desires, basic needs and spiritual calling.

One of the famous quotes in the Ishavasya Upanishad says:

Ishavasyam Idam Sarvam
Yat Kinch Jagatyam Jagat
Ten Tyaqten Bhunjitha
Ma Gridh Kasya Swidhanam

"This world created and owned by God, has enough to take care of everyone's needs. Do not show greed, be content in whatever you receive and do not eye others' share or possessions".

Our uncontrolled desires have a tendency to feed on each other, over a period of time, acquiring the status of greed and avarice, which, by their very nature, are insatiable. More often than not, we acquire objects only to satisfy our greed and not our needs. In fact many of us have in our possession, several objects and things that have not been used even once after acquiring them. In spiritual parlance this would be termed as theft. Our uncontrolled desires, our undeserved aspirations, are our biggest enemies. They compel us to do things and commit such actions that are not only detrimental to society, but also injurious to one's own well-being in the long-run.

At any given point of time in our life, we measure the extent of our happiness on the basis of desires that have been fulfilled. We always carry several desires in our bosom. Evidently, all of them can never be fulfilled; indeed, they are not likely to be. We must happily and gracefully count

those that have been realized and remain happy and content. Instead, we ruthlessly keep chasing those that have not been fulfilled and continue to remain miserable.

Another negative characteristic that our desires generate in us relates to absolute weakness and cowardice. In pursuit of fulfilling our desires, we often desist from following the path of righteousness and end up doing things that are contrary to our nature and against the established norms of society. Our unfulfilled desires also make us intellectually dishonest. We deliberately stay away from our assigned responsibilities and wait till the desired event takes place, or till the object of our desire falls into our lap. Having acquired that object, we hang on to it for our dear life, lest it is taken away by some event beyond our control. This generates avoidable fear.

Non-fulfillment of desires has another dangerous fall out. If our desires are not fulfilled or, in a larger sense, things do not happen the way we want them to happen, it leads to anger. Let us understand that the origin of all forms of anger can be traced back to our desires. The stronger the intensity of our yearning, the stronger is the intensity of anger and, to that extent, more difficult to control.

Amongst the most cherished emotions amongst human beings, freedom, peace and tranquility must occupy an important place. Our worldly desires have a direct relationship with them. We may enjoy physical freedom if do not commit any crime, but our freedom actually gets compromised by our own desires and peace will remain an absolute stranger so long as we carry unfulfilled aspirations.

Uncontrolled desires make us restive and prevent us from being focused on our task. Anger is like a burning fire that eats up our vitals and makes us behave like animals.

With greed and avarice, you lose all sense of proportion and your dignity. A wise man will completely jettison them from his system. These three emotions are potential destroyers of peace and happiness of an individual and are a sure way to hell.

3. Anger that primarily explodes because of non-fulfillment of our worldly desires must be completely taken out of our system.

We must realize that the world is not our personal fiefdom and everything will not happen according to our wishes. This world comprises different people and situations, with varying aspirations and mindset which may not coincide with our perspective. In any case, the reasons for non-fulfillment of desires or disagreement may be many and if properly rationalized, need not result in anger which only makes the situation worse.

Chapter 2, verses 62 and 63, of the Bhagwadgita give a very lucid and sequentially logical description of cause and effect of anger.

Dhyayato Vishyanpumsa
Sangasteshu Pajayate
Sangat Sanjayate Kama
Kama Krodho Abhijayate — *Ch. 2, V. 62*

"Constant contemplation of the objects of desire creates an attachment for that object. Attachment leads to desire for acquiring that object. An impediment in that desire generates anger".

Krodhadbhavati Sammoha
Sammohat Smriti Vibhrama
Smriti Bhramsad Buddhinasho
Buddhinashat Pranashayati — *Ch. 2, V. 63*

> "Anger gives rise to lack of discrimination, leading to loss of memory. Loss of memory which is an essential attribute of our intellect, results in its destruction. Loss of intellect signifies the end of that person".

It will be difficult to find a more profound and scientific analysis of the cause of anger and its effect on an individual. We are surrounded by beautiful products and objects of desire in this world which, in our view hold great promise for us. We think about them, contemplate them, start associating ourselves with them and in due course, develop attachment. This is a critical point in the evolution of the entire phenomenon. Two things can happen, either we use our intellect and let go the attachment or, we listen to our mind, and under the force of our senses, go for it. We develop a strong urge to acquire that object and possess it by all means possible. We may succeed sometimes, but often that object or that person is beyond our reach. There could be several other reasons that may prevent the fulfillment of our desire. There could be factors beyond our control and no matter how hard we try, we may not succeed. If we manage to detach ourselves, we remain on safe ground, but if we do not, it will give rise to anger and the resultant consequences.

Now let us examine the effect of anger and its consequences.

Uncontrolled anger leads to lack of discrimination and then to dementia. A habitually angry person will not only suffer from all kinds of physical disorders, but also from impairment of memory. This will inevitably create neurological disorders leading to destruction of memory. Memory loss, which is one of the primary functions of

the brain, would inevitably result in the downfall of that person.

Anger brings about several chemical changes in our body, mostly injurious in the long-run. They take place in a very subtle manner and we usually do not perceive their impact in the short-term.

Another deleterious effect that anger creates is with respect to our relationship with friends and colleagues and one silly display of emotion gives us a bad reputation. Everyone in the organization hates the person with an ill-temper. They would refuse to work with him or her and no one would be heard saying nice things about him. All the good qualities of a person are completely undone with a few harsh words or words spoken with anger, however unintentional they may be. You may be an excellent human being, always willing to help your friends and colleagues, but a few angry words and some unpredictable behaviour would mar your reputation beyond repair. Control on words and mannerisms, is extremely important. No one can peep into the mind of a person to assess his feelings and thoughts. You would, more often than not be judged by the words you speak and the manner in which you speak them, and not by the unspoken language. The art of speaking combines in itself, both the substantive part of the speech, as well as the intonation.

One study reveals that conflicts in interpersonal relationships arise not with regard to the content of the words expressed but because of the manner in which they are spoken.

One Recipe for controlling one's anger is being suggested here.

A bout of anger is invariably accompanied with shorter

breaths and consequent increase in their frequency. If we pay some attention to this phenomenon, pause for a moment and take a deep long breath, we may succeed in regaining our composure. Another very effective method to get out of this utterly useless emotion is to look oneself in the mirror while the bout is on. You would look so ugly that you may never want to repeat this act. Our tongue is the strongest muscle in our body. We must use it sparingly and with great restraint and caution.

4. Let us live life on the strength of our basic needs and jettison any feelings of greed or avarice.

Greed is a disease and uncontrolled greed is an incurable and a chronic condition. Most of us often possess more than what we actually need. I know of a gentleman who has about thirty-seven suits in his wardrobe which he gets dry-cleaned at the beginning of every winter. He gets to use only four or five during the entire length of the season. The only other use he has for this expensive wardrobe is, to exhibit it to a few visitors that he receives during this period. It is not very relevant to state his age, but my guess is that he is over seventy-five. He may never get to wear most of them in the remaining part of his life, but he would cling to them till the last. Is it not a criminal waste of resources?

The problem about greed is that it is not need-based. It propels a person to go for anything and everything without an honest assessment of his or her genuine needs. The concept of an open market for all its positive features has considerably enhanced the greed of those who have the resources, and have fuelled strong desires in those who do not have enough. The latter category therefore becomes easily corruptible. The greed in them forces them to resort

to unfair means to find resources and acquire their objects of desire. The media hype, the publicity and the marketing blitz do not make things easier.

Another interesting feature of the emotion called greed is that it is usually unstoppable. The person overcome with greed does not realize where to begin and where to stop. He is prone to a mindless spree of acquisitions, completely unrelated to his actual needs. He has no time to take stock of his inventory. In fact, he is not even aware of it. The rich and the powerful in every society usually exhibit this syndrome, creating a bad influence on others, leading to a highly skewed ownership pattern. A blatantly greedy person or a society is a curse and perhaps most unwittingly, disturbs the social and economic equilibrium of the country. Countries with a very large consumption pattern and attendant wasteful propensities are a threat, not only to themselves but also to this universe.

It would not be an exaggeration to state that such persons, societies and nations are largely responsible for drawing heavily upon scarce natural resources and causing extensive environmental degradation. Greed, as is evident from the foregoing analysis, is not an insular phenomenon. It is not limited to a few people or regions, but in a holistic sense affects the entire world. There is nothing wrong in acquiring enough for your genuine needs. Perhaps nothing wrong also in a few add-ons, but a mindless acquisition without relevance to the need or even limited ostentation is unpardonable.

A person given to excessive greed is indeed an insecure person. He lacks confidence in his inherent abilities to take care of his basic needs when he is actually required to do so. He is always busy adding to his possessions without needing them, perhaps for future contingencies.

I know of several august citizens of this country who spent all their lives toiling hard in mindless pursuit of amassing huge fortunes but never lived to enjoy them. The fruits of their labour, often harvested by unfair means were either appropriated by complete strangers, or used by their descendents with absolute profligacy. In a few cases, even the legitimate heirs of this ill-gotten wealth did not get a penny and lead a life of abject penury.

There is a famous story of a politician who never trusted his ill-gotten wealth with anybody and used to keep his acquired currency notes in a room next to his living room in steel cupboards. One fine day there was a fire in his house and all his illegally acquired wealth was destroyed. He also lost his seat in the next elections. The last few years of his life were spent in a state of utter poverty and misery, and his heirs now find it difficult even to make both ends meet.

5. Jealousy undermines our position and damages our reputation beyond repairs. Let us consciously replace it by feeling of love for all.

The word 'jealous' is amenable to use in two different situations. The classic interpretation is being envious of someone else's achievements or advantage. Another common usage of this word indicates being protective of one's rights or possessions. The reference here is to the former definition.

Jealousy is often referred to as a burning fire. This comparison cannot be faulted. Like fire, this emotion, witnessed amongst people of a weak character, burns a person from within. Interestingly, unlike anger which is gross and usually finds open expression in a person, jealousy is subtle and expresses itself gradually. It is more like a

slow smouldering fire rather than a huge conflagration, and it gradually eats into the vitals of the person affected by it.

As mentioned earlier, it normally affects a weak person, an emotionally weak human being. Mentally strong individuals are ordinarily immune to it. They would rather seek achievements on the basis of their own strengths, than grudge anybody else their achievements.

The Bhagwadgita makes an interesting comment about this fragile and a worthless emotion:

Yadricha Labh Santushto
Dwandateet Vimatsaro
Sidh Asidh Samobhutva
Kritvapi Na Nibadhayate

"The one, who has no desires and is content in whatever he receives on its own, has completely abandoned any feelings of jealousy, transcends the duality of happiness and sorrow. He remains indifferent to the success or failure and remains absolutely free of any bonds, while performing his duties".

One has to keep on working constantly and as a result of one's efforts, whatever is obtained or whatever comes one's way easily, should lead to contentment. One should, assiduously resist getting caught in the dualities of emotions or in the crossfire of conflicting opinions. Jealousy should have no place in your thoughts. Whether you achieve your mission and objective or not, remain as steadfast in your resolve as always, without showing any signs of discontentment. With such an attitude, you will remain free from bondage.

Jealousy in every sense of the term is very pernicious.

In fact, the person showing pangs of jealousy openly exposes his intention of nurturing desires without actually deserving them. Jealousy does not remain a stand alone emotion. It gives birth to several other negative emotions like anger, frustration, restlessness and cynicism. Often a person affected by jealousy, exhibits weird behaviour and acts like a little child whose toy has been stolen by someone. The trouble with this emotion is that it exposes you as being weak and an imbecile. In reality you are jealous of someone's achievement or possessions and that places you on a weak platform, and the person who is the object of your jealousy is seen as strong and resourceful. You end up achieving just the opposite of what you willed. If you have not succeeded in achieving what others have, and if that leads to pangs of jealousy, it does not speak highly of your capabilities. Further, as an exercise of self indulgence and in an effort to provide futile self assurance, you spare no means to denigrate others' achievements.

Unlike certain other negative emotions that we express in life, jealousy is a silly and non-productive emotion. It drains you completely and fails to create any impact on anyone except the person exhibiting that emotion. Sometime it becomes so obvious that you become a laughing stock, leading to self-inflicted degradation.

Amongst several negative emotions affecting the mortal beings, jealousy is the most useless and an eminently avoidable occupation. It makes you helpless, weak and imbecile. One way to avoid feeling wretched on account of this syndrome is to make an honest assessment of your belongings, and to cast a glance on those who possess much less than you. In a relative sense, it should actually inspire you to engage in a healthy competition to seek excellence.

6. Performance of karmas will generate corresponding results for you. Do not ever put the blame for your condition on others.

Always count your blessings and consider yourself as a fortunate person. Indulging in self-pity is perhaps one of the worst kind of emotions in this world. Do not pretend to become a martyr for an unworthy cause. Also most importantly, never hold others responsible for your misfortune.

The Bhagwadgita clarifies the definition of friends and foes in verse 5 of chapter 6 as follows:

Udhredatam Natmanam
Natmanam Vasadayet
Atmaiav Hyatmano Bandhu
Atmaiav Ripuratamana

"One should constantly endeavour to raise oneself by performing good actions and must never do anything to degrade oneself. A man is his own greatest friend and his own worst enemy".

No truer words were ever said. Someone who has conquered his mind and senses would never do anything wrong or anything to hurt anybody. His thoughts and his actions are controlled by himself and not the other way around. He is fully aware of his responsibility towards himself and others. For all that happens to him, he holds himself responsible. During the course of our life, we come across several people and are affected by scores of events. Some are good and leave behind good memories. Some are positively against our interests and cause harm to us or leave a bitter taste in our mouth. There is a quote that says-*"Some people cause happiness wherever they go, others whenever they go"*. This is more to do with the habits of

people rather than their real self that has no relationship with their habits. The habit of speaking against others, especially behind their backs, puts them in the latter category.

When good things happen to us, we either remain quiet because we think we deserve them or take them for granted. Negative events quickly invite our ire and disapproval, and we lose no time in putting the blame on others. Our ego prevents us from accepting any fault of ours. We find it extremely difficult to admit that we can do anything wrong.

Unfortunately, we do not stop at blaming others for our so-called misfortune. We also drag almighty God into this episode. He is just a mute witness and not in a position to rebut any of our insane statements. Interestingly, while we put all the blame on him for our miserable state, when something good happens to us, we take the entire credit. Is it not grossly unfair? In reality, he has nothing to do with our good or adverse state. The following two couplets will amply illustrate the truth:

Chapter 4, verse 14:

Na Mam Karmani Limpanti
Na Me Karamphale Spriha
Iti Mam Yo Abhijanati
Karambhi Na Sa Badhyate

"He very categorically states that He has no attachment with the fruits of anybody's actions. That is why He is not bound by any action. Those who know this reality do not get tied down to action or its result".

Chapter 5, verse 14:

Na Katritvam Na Karmani
Lokasaya Srijati Prabhu
Na Karamphal Sanyogam
Swabhavastu Pravartate

"God has nothing to do with the ownership of man's actions or results or the fruits thereof. Everything is happening according to the nature of the person who is seen as the doer".

Krishna removes all doubts in this regard when he makes the following assertions in verse 15 of chapter 5:

Na Date Kasyachit Papam
Na Chaiv Sukritam Vibhu
Agyanenan Avritam Gyanam
Ten Muyanti Jantava

"The omnipresent Ishwara does not assume responsibility for either the sin or good deed of anyone. The ignorant ones constantly suffer from a delusion".

These verses while reiterating the absolute indifference of God towards the action and the result of man's actions, squarely puts the responsibility on the nature of the person. Here one has to make a distinction between the person, and his nature that has been acquired over a period of time by his experiences and his inherent tendencies. The real person, his Atman which is his true self, is only a spectator, a mute witness to all that is happening, either on account of his own actions or because of external reactions. Such an understanding of the reality effectively divests him of his ego, and he is in a position to perform his duties without any attachment and qualifies to become a true yogi.

Let us examine this position in the light of reverse logic. If we were to associate ourselves with all our actions and the result thereof, we would continue to remain completely attached to them. Our ego will continue to play a dominant role in all that is happening. Inevitably, the result of our actions will fall in different categories. Some will be absolutely consistent with our desires, while others will only partially meet our expectations, and a few would turn out to be positively disagreeable and against our interests. So long as the going is good, we shall be happy. But a combination of disappointing outcomes and our formidable ego will not only prevent us from getting reconciled to the situation, it will only make us put the blame on others for our actions. Nothing could be more damaging than this in affecting our name and reputation. Unfortunately, in most of our dealings we follow this pattern. Good things happening to us as a result of our own actions are quickly owned by us, while adverse outcomes are seen to be created by others. Only a few would own responsibility for failure or evildoing, and those who exhibit the courage to own up in time, not only earn respect from others, but also become undisputed leaders in their own right.

In brief, therefore it is important to own responsibility for all our actions and strongly resist the temptation of blaming others for our predicaments. The source and the origin of all our actions has to be traced back to our nature, and any correction that can be effected has to be carried out there and then, and not by blaming others. In any case, the blame game will not improve matters and we will continue to repeat the same mistake over and over again to our own detriment.

7. It is important to understand one's Dharma and perform it with determination. One should be absolutely certain about what one wants, be decisive and use ethical ways to achieve them.

We nurture several desires in our heart during our lifetime. Living in this world where, apart from our own survival, we get into various relationships with others that require our active support and participation. It is therefore foolhardy to presume that we can live without any desires. Absolute renunciation is neither practicable nor desirable. Also, all desires cannot be dubbed as undesirable. We must, however, make a conscious choice in selecting those desires, the fulfillment of which will lead to universal benefit. Those that benefit only one or two persons can never lead to lasting happiness. That, in candid words, is pure selfishness and we all know that selfishness never pays in the long-run.

While not completely banning entertaining desires, it is always advisable to keep them to an absolute minimum and, to the extent possible, lead a life of simplicity. Let us be absolutely sure that our desires and expectations play a very critical role in our state of happiness.

The Bhagwadgita makes the following observations about—Desires attachment, peace and happiness. Chapter 2, verse 71 says:

Vihaya Kamanaya Sarvan
Pumanshcharti Nispriha
Nirmamo Nirahankar
Sa Shantim Adhigachhati

"One, who has renounced all desires, does not entertain any worldly aspirations, has no attachments and leads his life without any ego, attains peace and happiness".

It may be a tall order for us to follow this dictum in its entirety, yet those looking for relative peace and happiness can take a cue from this thought. A state of infinite peace and happiness is in fact, our true state and we have completely forgotten it, forsaken it in exchange for a few material desires that can never assure lasting happiness. Man's true identity is a state of Bliss-Purna Ananda (Sat, Chitta, Ananda) and for that he has to look inwards. We have forgotten the art of living in peace and permanent happiness, and are in fact constantly running away from it. Actually, if one analyzes carefully the various events that take place in our life and ponders over the ephemeral nature of all worldly objects of desire, one would inevitably reach the conclusion that there is no reason for us to ever get despondent. We are all influenced by the phenomenon of mirages and externalities in our bid to look for happiness. 'Joie De Vivre' has to be found within and now.

At this stage it would be interesting to quote the very pertinent advice from the Gita. In chapter 12, verse 13 and 14, Krishna tells Arjuna:

Advaishta Sarvabhutanam
Maitra Karuna Aiv Cha
Nirmamo Nirahankar
Samsukh Dukh Khashmi *Ch. 12, V. 13*

"Those who nurture no hatred for anyone in this world, are friendly towards everyone, are compassionate, are completely detached, have no ego, remain equipoise in sorrow or happiness and are absolutely forgiving even to their enemies, are my real devotees and are blessed".

Santushtam Satatam Yogi
Yatatma Drirhnischaya
Mayyi Arpit Mano Budhi
Madhbhakta Sa Me Priya *Ch. 12, V. 14*

"Equally blessed are those who always remain contented within themselves, are yogis and possess firm determination. In addition to the above, those who have surrendered their heart and intellect to God remain dear to Him".

These two verses recount the qualities of the blessed ones.

Having carefully realized our basic needs and concomitant desires at the minimum level, we must now look at their manner of execution. This exercise is equally important because the means of acquiring any object in life needs to be fully justified. We may talk about reducing our desires to a bare minimum, but if we take recourse to unethical means to achieve them, the entire transaction assumes a negative connotation. My understanding is that, by and large, if we were to follow a righteous path in all our dealings, we would easily get our basic needs fulfilled. Doing it any other way, will lead to distortions in society as also create inequalities, corruption and avoidable unpleasant situations. The problem arises when we tend to acquire more than we need, store it, waste it and effectively deprive other legitimate users. We literally tie ourselves down to our belongings and cannot ever dream of parting with them. Bigger acquisitions also carry the additional burden of their upkeep, maintenance, protection, an extra cost and a constant fear of losing them.

Interestingly, with more wealth in our hands, our consumption level goes up. Practically everything that we acquire and use in our lifetime falls in the category

of consumables. This of course applies to the items of personal consumption in a bigger way. Each of these items has an expiry date written on it in a prominent way. We keep buying them, keep them in our storage and in utter disregard of the "best before" date unwittingly allow them to rot or disintegrate. Any suggestion to give it away to those who need it is met with strong resistance. How our excessive greed and tendency to acquire more than our legitimate needs, affects the economy and induces a skewed pattern of consumption is evidenced by the following.

Supposing the common pool of goods and services in a system is fixed, and if a few individuals tend to buy many times more than their actual requirement, the total remaining availability for the rest (whose number is large) will come down, leading to rise in prices and make them unaffordable. The per capita consumption of the latter category will sharply decline creating conditions of relative poverty and crime. In my opinion, acquiring more than one's needs is more a sign of insecurity than of prosperity. The bigger consumers also suffer in the process because at the end of the day, rise in prices equally affects them. This phenomenon affects society across the board and eventually retards all round progress. A materialistic definition of this may not indicate crime, but in the spiritual context it would be called stealing.

Increased production may not necessary be the answer to this problem. There again the rich will tend to buy more and waste more bringing us back to the same position. The answer to this economic distortion lies in a balanced purchase and consumption pattern. In other words, we shall have to make an intelligent estimate of our needs and shop accordingly, leaving enough for everyone at an affordable level. All nations and societies that indulge in

a mindless consumption binge perish much faster than those that follow a balanced approach.

Typically, individuals in these societies are exposed to double jeopardy. They eat more, consume more, spend more and add more to their bodies leading to obesity and health problems. Thereafter they spend many times more to shed extra weight in getting back to shape. Some of them suffer from irretrievable health ailments and incur life long pain and monetary loss.

Lastly, having made a conscious estimation of our actual needs and concomitant desires, we should stay firm on them not just as a knee-jerk reaction or on impulse, which may be construed as obduracy, but after carefully assessing our needs and of those who are dependent on us.

In conclusion, it is important to take a balanced view, optimize our desires in proportion to our basic needs and seek to achieve them in an ethical and firm manner. Nothing will damage and disturb your peace, as the combined effect of a vacillating mind and excessive material desires.

8. Forgiving others is counted as a great magnanimous gesture. One should wish well for all, be willing to help others and not hesitate in forgiving even those who may have hurt you.

"Sarve bhavanti Sukhina", "Everyone, should be happy" are the words that should resound in the hearts and lips of all of us. These thoughts, by themselves create such a lot of positive energy all around and remove any sense of alienation or animosity amongst people of different sections.

Exchange of positive vibes amongst our fellow beings is indeed, an important step towards an ideal lifestyle management.

Wish well to all and sundry. Do not ever close your fist in giving compliments to others, nor ever wish ill of others. That is perhaps the best way to earn goodwill, which is what you carry with you when you leave this world. No one in recorded history has ever carried his wealth for use in the next life, nor any other material possessions. We must be absolutely sure that all our efforts and associations in the material context have a short shelf life. For some it does not last even their life time. For others who are born with a silver spoon in their mouth as the saying goes, it may remain as long as they live. As soon as they die, all their material possessions are appropriated by their heirs or others. Any claim of the property or the wealth earned by them in the previous birth will only be scoffed at.

The most important part of wishing well to others is that there should not be any 'Quid Pro Quo'. You should be, and seen to be, a well-wisher to all concerned without any hidden interest. Easier said than done, you would say. But try doing it for some time and you will discover a perceptible improvement in your well-being. And the goodwill that you will generate, will defy measurement on any scale. This is the strength of the positive thoughts and vibrations that you transmit to others. And trust me you will also become a recipient of these vibrations in several ways.

A converse situation proves to be disastrous for individuals and the society. Let us for a moment ponder over what we keep doing in our free time at office, club or at home. We spend most of our precious time talking about others. At work we discuss our bosses, at the club we talk about politicians and at home, ours or others discuss friends and relatives. The general tenor of our discussion

is laced with negativity. Behind the backs of the people we discuss, we use the choicest expletives to vent our suppressed feelings with a false assumption that these would not reach them. We literally let go and tear every one to pieces, every one we know and every one who is not present at the meet. Boss usually is the common subject of discussion and anyone who does not know him, would consider him the most horrible person on earth after listening to the conversation. However, what is said in his presence and to him is a different story. Some of the offshoots of this phenomenon are as follows.

What we say about others is usually a reflection of our own self. We in our subconscious mind want every one to think and behave in the same way as we do. And if others do not do so, we condemn them.

What we say about others, especially if it is negative in nature, is sure to find its way to the person spoken about sooner than we think. We should understand that our environment is a transparent carrier and sometimes this information is carried by the same person who most actively contributes to the conversation. Our universe has five basic elements, namely fire, earth, water, air and the mythical ether. The last one, ether, provides the medium to all forms of energy. Bad words spoken are converted into negative energy in the form of vibrations and more often than not, reach the person spoken about. If you do not wish to be a well-wisher for some reason, the least that you can do is to keep quiet.

If we generally are in the habit of criticizing others, then be sure that no one will ever say nice things about us. Over a period of time the same set of people who encouraged you to mouth profanities about others will shun your company. I know of a lady who has never ever

said any good things about anyone in this world. She does not spare even her husband and her sons from the negativity which perhaps has become her first nature. I have also never heard any good words being said about her and, needless to mention, she has no friends.

By thinking and talking ill of others all the time you often become like that. A person's thoughts are indeed a reflection of his own personality. Psychologically speaking, one of the reasons of our saying uncomplimentary things about others is the latent desire to get into a comfort zone, because we see our own self in that person. If you are a corrupt person, you feel comfortable presuming others to be equally corrupt. In fact, a person with unimpeachable integrity would seldom call another person corrupt. He is for ever willing to give the benefit of doubt to others.

Another reason for criticizing others is that you want to feel superior to others and by saying unsavoury things about them you start feeling good in comparison. Is it not rightly called an inferiority complex? There is no gainsaying the fact, that each one of us must acquire a status on the strength of our own actions and convictions rather than piggy-back on the real or imaginary weaknesses of others.

Wishing others well is the most cost-effective and inexpensive activity. It does not cost a penny and the returns are big and are, indeed, immeasurable. I think it is extremely wise to make this investment and if we keep making it all the time, it would keep reaping cumulative rewards. The rewards may not necessarily be tangible in nature, and may not convert themselves in monetary terms, but in terms of the joy and consequential well-being that will come forth, they would be immensely gratifying. Sadly, criticizing others gives us a kick, seems more enjoyable

in the short-run. In fact all negative emotions expressed in relation to others give us a momentary pleasure leading to a terrible hangover. Let us make an intelligent choice between a short-lived pleasure with bad after-effects and a long-term investment that creates lasting goodwill.

Amongst several virtues that society holds at a premium, is forgiveness. The inherent capacity to forgive and forget is a mark of a person full of inner strength and fortitude. It is usually the weak and the insecure who refuse to forget, leave alone forgive.

Let us examine the consequences of an unforgiving nature. An individual has been wronged and it may have caused him irreparable injury. He holds another person responsible for it. The person who has been hurt has two options. He either forgets the incident by reasoning that may be, partly he was responsible for it and the other person had only an insignificant role in causing hurt. Or, the more likely scenario is, that he has not done anything wrong, and all his problems are on account of others' actions. In this situation not only are they busy nursing their own grief, they also nurse an equally vicious grudge against the person who has allegedly caused injury to them. The relevant incident and that person dominate their thoughts constantly. Have we ever considered that we think more about our enemies than our friends, and in certain respects are obsessed by a desire to get even, and this unwittingly creates an adverse effect on our own psyche? We constantly look for an opportunity of settling scores with them. Depending on the stakes involved and the perception of the injury suffered, we prepare ourselves for revenge and do not rest in peace till it is executed to our satisfaction. What we do not consider is that the revenge will inevitably bring retribution of a higher degree leading to life-long

animosity. Additionally, till we are able to settle scores to our absolute satisfaction (a rare phenomenon), we continue to suffer in silence thereby causing irreparable damage to our mind and body. We must remember that two individuals who have had a fight can never get even. There is always a lingering perception in both that the other person has caused more harm while I am the innocent party. We are, for ever willing to become martyrs without any worthwhile cause.

Your act of forgetting and forgiving will not only settle the matter amicably, but will make the other person more defensive in addition to earning the respect of others. A legitimate question that may arise is what if that person regards us as a soft target and keeps repeating his vicious acts? Surely in that eventuality it will be time to act; any act which is willfully and deliberately repeated with the intention of causing hurt must be suitably thwarted. The important thing is to jettison our own baggage of miseries and perceived inferiority that we carry with us all the time.

The perception of having been wronged can often snowball into a strong feeling which has the danger of assuming unmanageable proportions. Let us take the example of a river at its point of origin, and at a point a few miles downstream. At its origin you can stand in the water for hours without any fear of being knocked down. The flow is just a trickle and you can handle it with great ease. Try doing that at a place a few miles down the point of origin, and you either get drowned or get carried for away several miles. This is exactly what happens to our negative emotions and feelings of being wronged by others. It is much better to get rid of them at the earliest, lest they threaten to grow like a huge uncontrollable torrent from which there is no redemption.

Forgiveness also figures amongst the greatest of virtues. Here again, one has to make a distinction between the act committed, whether innocently or with deliberate intention. The former must, without any fuss, qualify for forgiveness. As for the latter, the better option would be to forgive than not. An unforgiving mind always remains embittered and angry, and anger does not help anybody in any situation. Forgiving others brings grace and solves several problems that we come across in our inter-personal relationships.

There is another very strong reason to defend the concept of forgiving and we must show enough graciousness to accept it. We normally subscribe to the view that all things good or bad happen to us according to our own Karmas, which connotes all actions past or present. We are also responsible for our own destiny. Interestingly, if good and positive things happen to us, we lose no time to appropriate the credit for ourselves. But if something bad happens to us or if some damage is caused, we quickly put the blame on others. Heading the list of our accused usually is God, who we know, will never respond to our accusation and will be a silent listener to our rubbish. The next in line are those that are capable of causing the least harm to us. Those who are potentially strong or in our perception can either cause grave harm or can confer huge benefits on us, seldom find mention in our list of accused regardless of their culpability. In other words, our act of not forgiving others is limited to those who are mute, weak or are perceived to be equal without any advantage to us. It is therefore unethical not to forgive. Also, if the cause of everything lies within us, there is no justification for putting the blame on others. There is therefore no reason not to forgive and every reason to do so.

While it may not be too difficult to forget and forgive

the acts of omission or commission committed by people we know or even those committed by strangers, forgiving our worst enemies poses a great challenge to us. Greatness and indeed, graciousness would demand that when the situation requires, we do not hesitate in doing so. Such acts and gestures put us on a high pedestal.

Lastly, one needs to reflect on the utter futility and immorality of not forgiving. The need for forgiveness arises when one person has caused damage to another by his action or by the lack of it. The important fact that requires consideration is that the damage has been done and one either expects the guilty to be punished and suffer in proportion to the injury inflicted, or suffer the ignominy of our scorn for the rest of his life. Neither of these situations is acceptable and smack of vindictiveness and are hence immoral. Sometimes it becomes difficult to identify the right person who is responsible for the act. The identity of the perpetrator of the wrong is based on our perception which may not always be right. It is therefore always safer to give the benefit of doubt. An unforgiving mind is also a highly disturbed mind and cannot rest in peace, till the accused is given a peace of his mind by the wronged person.

Be ready and willing to forgive all, in all situations

9. Common prudence dictates that we should concern ourselves with something that is within our control. All karmas that we perform fall in that category. Doing something, as a reaction to the karmas performed by others invites avoidable problems. Strictly follow your action regimen and try and avoid any reactionary tendencies.

Newton's Third Law of Motion says: 'To every action there

is an equal and opposite reaction'. It is very easy to draw an assumption that what is good for science should be good for our lives. It is important to note that the reaction is not only opposite, it is also equal. This point is being emphasized at the very outset, because most of us tend to forget that if we do some harm or good to some one, we can escape with less or more. We mistakenly hope that if we do good deeds we will get more in return, and if we do harm we would perhaps receive less when our turn comes. The fact is that our returns are, and have to be absolutely equal otherwise the law would be wrong and we all know that it is not true. Newton's Law has stood its ground despite years of close scrutiny.

Now let us try and understand the true import of Action and Reaction.

1. Action takes place when we use our physical or intellectual energy to do something and it often results in some movement.
2. Action is the first step of a transaction.
3. Action is usually voluntary in nature.
4. It is in the control of the person initiating it and hence is deemed to be deliberate.
5. It is usually performed with a view to achieve something.
6. It may be performed with either good or evil intentions.
7. The person performing an action more often than not expects a reaction.

Reaction ordinarily is a response to action and may have the following attributes:

1. Reaction also involves the use of physical or mental energy. The quantum may however vary.

2. Reaction need not necessarily be the second step in the transaction. It may be the second or the third or none at all.
3. Reaction is induced and is therefore secondary in nature.
4. Reaction by definition is not voluntary and is more in the form of a response.
5. The person reacting is generally led on and he may or may not intend to achieve anything.
6. If the intentions of the person acting initially are explicit, they would in all probability generate a corresponding reaction. But if these are camouflaged and subtle which is the case when these are of an evil nature, the reaction may become unpredictable. Sometimes, the reaction can be completely at a tangent.
7. A wise man often eschews any form of reaction.

Indeed, this is the main thrust of this analysis. In fact thoughtful introspection would reveal the utter futility and often dangerous consequences of reactions. Unfortunately, most of us react more often than act, and that lands us in deep trouble. This happens because we are constantly moving around in a state of complete unawareness and seem to 'act' only in the form of reaction. All our reactions mistakenly appear to us as our actions. This is indeed a dangerous delusion. We are seldom masters of what we do and therefore, each one of us is busy reacting to what others have said or done. The interesting aspect of the entire transaction is that the person to whose alleged action we are reacting, is also, in real terms only reacting to someone else's action or reaction. This game thus goes on endlessly like a silly joke being played till its originator is exposed.

Let us see what happens in real life. Each one of us carries a switchboard with multiple switches as it were. Somebody known or unknown to us comes along and presses one switch and we become angry. Another person makes us jealous by pressing another switch. A third more wily man comes along and presses multiple switches and we go wild with several emotions crowding our brain simultaneously with disastrous results. Obviously we are not in control of ourselves or our emotions, and are constantly manipulated by others for their selfish motives.

A person with an independent mind and with complete awareness of the people and his surroundings would be extremely slow to react. Before saying or doing anything, he will weigh all the pros and cons and then Act. There is no such thing as 'in the heat of the moment' for him. Try his patience as hard as you may, he will persistently refuse to take the bait. While reaction is a secondary form of action, with a little bit of patience and application of our thinking mind, it can be turned around as a primary emotion or as an original action or no action at all. This would effectively put an end to any manipulations others may try. The other day I was watching an interesting advertisement on the subject of undergarments. Of course the content of the ad had very little connection with the products, but it did manage to convey the message.

A famous star from the film industry is shown travelling in a crowded city bus. The driver of the bus is forced to apply brakes suddenly and most of the passengers standing in the bus fall on top of each other. One of the passengers accuses the film star of deliberately pushing him. The film star denies the allegation saying that he has not pushed him. That person persists in his allegation. The film star then makes a statement supposed to be the punch line of

the ad. He says, suppose I am pushing you, why are you allowing yourself to be pushed? This very succinctly sums up the general trend. People around us will wittingly or unwittingly keep pushing us all the time. It is entirely up to us whether to take the push or not. We invariably take it and 'React' and that starts the bedlam. Most often, all our problems begin at the point of our reaction. If others are acting out of viciousness or are reacting, we have a choice of either ignoring it, remaining quiet or hitting back without assessing the opponent's strength or his intentions. We usually take the latter option and get into serious trouble.

All our lives we are caught in an intricate web of action and reaction. We either react physically or worse still remain mentally disturbed. In all our inter-personal relationship, this story repeats itself ad nauseam. Take the proverbial behaviour of a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. One says something to the other and that other either hits back or keeps brooding over it, and at the end of the day complains to her husband. Both of them plead innocence in front of their respective spouses but the bitterness continues and only gets aggravated. The most interesting part of the entire episode is that the person who has initiated and provoked the reaction moves on as if nothing has happened, leaving the other fuming and brooding over the remarks allegedly made to her. Let us be sure that the person, who has made the initial damaging remarks, is also fuming and fretting over someone else's remarks. This chain thus keeps moving sequentially or randomly.

Any form of reaction being an induced action is, by definition secondary in nature and should be avoided in all situations. While reacting, we are seldom in control of ourselves and this we all know is certainly not desirable. It is therefore advisable to concentrate on our actions and

make sure that we do not get caught in the reactionary syndrome. A legitimate question that may arise, relates to the kind of action one needs to perform. An answer to this query may not be difficult but it often bothers most of us. One can make two observations about this.

Firstly, as we grow up a general awareness about right or wrong is instilled in us and by and large the societal norms about right or wrong are known to a normal individual. For example, speaking the truth, not doing anything that might hurt somebody, maintaining integrity in all our dealings, not speaking ill of others, be ready and willing to help others, respecting everyone especially the elders, and carrying yourself with dignity, not indulging in any violent behaviour etc., are actions nobody can disagree with.

Secondly, do not indulge in those actions that you would not approve, if others were doing them. In others words, do not do anything that you in your judgment perceive to be wrong and in that respect, use the same yardstick for evaluating your action and those of others'. Very often there is a discernible contradiction in our conduct and behaviour. We often end up doing certain things that are strictly not correct and when opposed, we defend our actions. The same action committed by others invites strong criticism from us.

10. Cheerfulness is the first sign of a noble soul. It adds to your attractiveness and improves your physical and intellectual well-being. Exude warmth and affection for everyone and consciously avoid any feeling of hatred.

One morning, I went to play golf without the usual four-ball combination. Normally I play with close friends but that day there was no prior rendezvous. As per the rules

I cannot play alone and had to join another group. There were three players ahead of me who had teed-off and I requested them to allow me to join them. The oldest of the three gentlemen who perhaps would be over 85 years of age, waved me on in a gesture of joining them. Thrilled at the prospect of starting my game, I took some time taking the address to the ball, in practice swings, and then took my shot. This old man, all this while stood patiently and waited till I covered the distance to join him. He walked up to me and introduced himself with such affability and warmth that I suddenly felt very comfortable and at ease. This gentleman then introduced his other companions, and I discovered that all three were old friends and had been playing together for many years.

They had an option to refuse but instead called me in. All through the game they kept making small conversation and I felt absolutely at ease resulting in better play that day. At the end of the game, this gentleman invited me to join them for breakfast for which he was going to pay. Such magnanimity and such warmth to a stranger, is indeed rare. He reiterated his invitation in the true Indian tradition of hospitality that bowled me over completely. I may never get to meet that gentleman in my life again. A simple gesture of making me a part of his team with such unadulterated warmth deeply touched me. Next time around, if a stranger comes by and wants to join us, I shall have his example to guide me. I think it is possible for all of us to follow this example. It does not cost us a penny and yet enables us to earn goodwill that has no monetary equivalent. Additionally, it gives us a high of being good to others and raises our esteem in the eyes of others.

Conversely, if they had refused to allow me to join them for any reason, it would have made no difference. I would

have waited for a few more minutes and joined someone else for a game. Of course, I would have cursed the old man and his friends for sure. Not that it would reach them or make any difference to them, but a great opportunity of spreading warmth with a cascading effect would have been lost, adding to the existing negative energy on the course. The important point however is, that the warmth we exhibit should be genuine and make others feel comfortable. This is where our mannerisms are more important than the spoken words.

It is equally important to banish any thought of hatred for anybody. If one cannot exude warmth for others, the least one can do is to remain aloof and indifferent. Feelings of hatred should be avoided at all costs. The only person who suffers the most in the transaction of hatred is the person who is expressing it. The targeted person of your hatred, in most cases is not even aware of your feelings unless they are expressed openly. Hatred, unlike love or warmth is a covert emotion and is rarely expressed except in extreme situations. It usually remains within the person smitten by it and eats at his vitals. The most interesting aspect of this emotion called hatred is that it serves no purpose, other than adversely affecting the mental condition of the person indulging in it. The genesis of hatred can be traced back to the following five factors:

1. Somebody has either abused or harmed you.
2. Another person known to you has done much better than you have in the pursuit of his ambition.
3. Someone indulges in filthy habits.
4. You do not like a person because of his station in life and for social and economic reasons and therefore you hate him.
5. You hate a person because of the colour of his skin.

A cursory analysis of all these reasons will reveal the utter futility of your emotion. It not only avoidably torments you, but leaves you utterly helpless. There is nothing that you can do about any of these, and it is therefore pointless nurturing this silly negativity.

Lack of warmth towards people in general and feelings of hatred are a syndrome of our elephantine ego. We, for some inexplicable reason, regard ourselves as superior to others and do not condescend to waste our precious time. This is true in case of either of these two contrary emotions. The concept of equality of all human beings is the 'sine quo non' of the universe. Nobody in this world has become a great leader by resorting to the practice of discrimination amongst his fellow beings. You have to treat everyone as equal to start with. It may be that a few individuals excel in their field of work, and in accordance with your value system are preferred ones, but the innate concept of equality cannot be sacrificed at the altar of the whims of a few individuals. Spread as much warmth as you can in your daily interactions and assiduously eschew hatred of any kind. You will very soon see the difference to your own self.

People who spread warmth everywhere are welcomed by all with open arms. Their expressions and mannerisms alone are their introduction to strangers. They are also the ones who can win the confidence of others without trying too hard. The cold and the distant ones on the other hand create suspicion and they need to work really hard to be accepted. The cold-blooded, like their counterparts in the animal world like snakes, only generate fear and suspicion.

11. It is important to feel happy within. This will ensure a perpetual smile on your face and that will literally enhance your face value.

Those who understand facial anatomy will tell you that when you smile, number of muscles used are for less than when you frown. We all know that our muscles use up a large quantity of oxygen. The quantity of oxygen inhaled in one breath remaining the same, much of this is taken up by our facial muscles leaving none or little for the rest of the body. In other words, if you frown, your entire body suffers from lack of oxygen and when you smile, you maintain a healthy disposition, literally and metaphorically. How do we maintain that demeanour on a long-term basis is a challenge, and one wonders: is it really possible with hundreds of other emotions flooding our psyche during the course of the day? The answer to this question is 'yes' provided certain fundamental issues are addressed. Usually this phenomenon occurs without the person being aware of it.

Our face, as common wisdom goes, is a reflection of our inner self. We have to first learn to smile within ourselves or be happy inside to be able to smile outside. How do we do that? First, a healthy body is a prerequisite and then a healthy mind. We must necessarily look after our body, not in an obsessive way but to ensure its basic hygiene and immunity. The food and dietary habits have to be such that we do not indulge in overeating leading to flatulence, a sure enemy of a smiling face. A burning sensation in the pit of our stomach has to be avoided for a happy demeanour. Aches and pains in different parts of the body will not allow any smile on our face. One does not need a body with six or eight packs or strong biceps to take on the load of a perpetual smile. It is enough

to have a physique that is healthy in accordance with known and established parameters.

What is however of bigger importance is our state of mind. We need to constantly experience the joy of smiling. But this joy will keep eluding us as long as we remain weighed down with negative thoughts. Thoughts of all kinds will keep entering our mind constantly and there is nothing that we can do about them, but much would depend on the nature of these thoughts and that will have a direct co-relation with our facial expressions. An absolutely free mind, unencumbered with any thoughts, is a fertile ground for projecting a pure smile. We talked earlier about a state of thoughtless consciousness, when a person does not carry any thoughts especially, concerning the external world. This state of mind is eminently conducive to wearing a beatific smile when the face has a perpetual glow. This is also a reflection of absolute purity of heart and mind.

Here it is extremely important to make one thing absolutely clear. Very few thoughts about the external world can help us sustain the perpetual smile that we are talking about. Some of them may, in passing, but a large majority of them will only bring a frown to our face. The human mind is generally more conditioned to think about unfulfilled desires, unfinished tasks, adverse remarks made by others some solicited, some unsolicited and our adversaries, and these factors are not likely to bring a smile to our face. Again we need to consciously endeavour and address these issues when we face them, in other words, cross the bridges when we reach them and not brood and ponder over them in anticipation.

But we all know that this state is a rarity and most of us, during the course of our working hours keep getting affected with several thoughts, and it becomes well nigh

impossible to keep that appearance all the time. All negative thoughts like jealousy, greed, anger, hatred and impatience are indeed a great hindrance to our wearing a smile. In fact, in any of these states, a smile would be an impossible occurrence. The only way of getting out of this mindset is constant practice. There is no short cut. Every time a negative thought crosses our mind, we should consciously shift our thoughts to something pleasant and retrieve our smile.

A smile can also take on different looks that will qualify it and each will have a different expression. These differences may be subtle but a discerning eye can tell one form from the other. There are smiles that are pure and beatific. One can wear a sardonic smile, a wry smile, a smile of surprise and amazement, a smile indicating appreciation and so on. Some people smile to themselves and these are usually those who in a particular situation prefer solitude. The reference is to people who are in love and they smile thinking about certain pleasantries that they may have exchanged with their beloved. To people smitten with a new found love, the mere thought of their loved one brings a smile.

I have known people who smile and whose eyes shine when they are overcome with strong emotions. The most interesting part about this phenomenon of smiling is, that all of us during the course of our life have experienced all kinds of smiles, depending upon the emotion present at that point of time. It should therefore be possible for us to pick and stick with the one that gave us maximum pleasure and happiness. But sadly it does not happen that way. Our smile remains a function of our emotions and our state of mind. There is no way one can segregate the two. In a rare situation, when we do manage to separate them, it turns out to be an artificial smile or a plastic smile

that is apparently devoid of any emotion. Some people in the service sector like airlines, hospitality and selling business display this plasticity. This smile also disappears as soon as it appears. The person displaying such a smile and the recipient are both aware of its worthlessness and hence let it pass without comment.

A good and genuine smile however can do wonders to your business and interpersonal relationships. A good smile, without having to use any words, immediately signals welcome. Even an absolute stranger is put at ease and becomes comfortable if we smile at him. We must always remember that people who come visiting us or otherwise meet us in neutral territory, are both potential givers and takers. Somebody coming to us does not always mean to take something away from us. He may turn out to be a benefactor. It is therefore advisable not to keep our smile selective.

There is a famous couplet that gives some interesting advice:

Kabira Is Samsar Me Sab Se Miliye Dhaye
Na Jane Kis Roop Me, Narayan Mil Jaye.

"Kabir says that in this world meet everyone with the same happy spirit. You never know in which form and state you meet God".

Smiles can also be infectious provided they are genuine. We often use the expression 'smiling from ear to ear'. This state represents a phenomenon of extreme happiness and in a sense a restrained form of laughter. On the other extreme, there are some people who have a reputation of never smiling in their life. And there are some who are so frugal with their smiles that they become akin to P.G.Wodehouse's description of a smile which is just a slight muscular spasm

on the cheeks. From a smile you graduate to a louder version called 'laughter' and there are people who are able to laugh so easily, while to some even a smile is a stranger, leave alone hearty laugh. Of course, a smile which is a more subtle emotion is the first step towards full-throated laughter.

There is another interesting phenomenon when people are seen smiling and crying at the same time. I wonder how many of us have experienced that. This happens when you visualize a situation that touches you deeply, a gesture full of human goodness and you are overcome with emotions that can express themselves only in tears. You feel happy inside but are hesitant in expressing it because others may not be in a similar mood.

The important point, however, is that it is both extremely healthy and desirable to smile than not, and it is equally important to spread this amongst people we meet. A person with a smiling disposition has many friends and those with frowns are only left with permanent lines on their faces. These lines do not foretell the future nor do they define the destiny. They only indicate the level of stress.

Live your life joyously with a perpetual smile on your face. If you cannot do that, stay away from the public gaze. You have no business to inflict your unhappiness and a frowning face on others.

12. It is extremely important to be honest, and show great sense of intellectual honesty in all your dealings.

Foremost amongst the values that were instilled in us as children, 'speaking the truth' and 'honesty' occupied pride of place. The concept of truth was easy to understand, but correct definition of honesty continued to remain an

enigma, till very late in life. Truth is straightforward. There are no ifs and buts in it. Something either exists or it does not exist. Truth is simple and is pure white, contrasted with lies, that is black. Also, there are no grey areas, as far as truth is concerned. Only some of us, for our convenience, have created them to indicate half-truths. But that is dishonesty and is a product of a cynical mind. Truth is unchangeable, everlasting and not amenable to vicissitudes of life, or of the world. Truth will remain a truth, whether spoken in India or in the forests of Africa. We often use a prefix before the word truth, such as absolute truth, complete truth, nothing but the truth etc. Such practice is absolutely redundant. Truth does not require any crutches or qualifications and indeed no explanations. If it did, it would cease to be 'the truth'. The most fundamental and important truth about 'the truth' is that it is immutable.

Sadly, the virtue of honesty does not enjoy the privilege of immutability. It really is an off-shoot of the phenomenon of truth, but is more complex than truth. It is a variable entity that different societies have defined and redefined to adapt to the changing value-systems, and perhaps to seek protection against minor aberrations. We sometimes describe honesty in relative terms and no one objects to it. We have also, considerably diluted the definition of honesty over the years, a phenomenon that we would like to apply to the concept of truth, as well. However, we do not seem unduly perturbed about not being able to dilute 'the truth', for a simple reason and that is: Telling a lie, or not speaking the truth, does not invite heavy sanctions and serious punishments. It is usually dismissed with a reprimand and may be a sullied reputation, but there are no monetary or physical sanctions.

Dishonesty on the other hand, entails severe punishment,

and if a person is caught and imprisoned, he loses his reputation, and the money earned by dishonest means. We live in a strange world divided into several nations and societies, that exhibit far more strange behaviour in the manner they treat the hierarchy of virtues and vices. To my knowledge, there are very few societies in the world that sanction punishment for telling a lie, committing perjury is one example, but the punishment prescribed hardly poses any deterrent. One can, of course find many societies and countries, whose law books prescribe severe punishment for dishonesty, and for employing dishonest means to acquire wealth. Telling a lie, is as serious a sin as being dishonest, and must invite equal punishment, if not more.

Let us try and understand why people indulge in dishonest means, and how does it affect the society. The following could be the possible reasons why some people resort to dishonest means:

1. That person is living in a state of abject poverty and has a family to support.
2. He has tried all means of earning in an honest way, but does not succeed.
3. Or another person though reasonably well-off, is worried about his future and wants to have more than what is actually required.
4. There is a pressure on him from his family members, who are obviously not happy in what they are getting. Others seem to enjoy more facilities and luxuries and they suffer from a complex.
5. Necessities in the world are important, but they are not enough. Every human being, first works for his basic needs to be fulfilled and thereafter starts chasing luxuries, both to enhance his comfort level, as well as to show it to the world.

6. If others do not get to know the acts of dishonesty, a person does not mind employing dishonest means.
7. If the laws and law-enforcement agencies of the countries are lax, he does not hesitate in using dishonest means.
8. The normal tendency of people in general is to stay honest, but seeing others using dishonest means creates a demonstrative effect.
9. Most of us, indeed all of us, at some point in time have nurtured dishonest thoughts. Large majority puts them in action.
10. Some of us are habitually greedy, and remain constantly on the look-out for opportunities to acquire more than we actually need, for our life-time.
11. Power and greed, inevitably makes a person resort to dishonest means, to acquire wealth that legitimately belongs to others, or dip into the common pool of funds meant for public good.
12. Desire to live in an extravagant way, without having the legal means to do so, leads to dishonesty.
13. Some of us acquire bad habits, and certain vices that are difficult to jettison. We use dishonest means, both to hide as well as satisfy them.
14. Some of us are habitually lazy, but the desire to lead a comfortable life, makes us use dubious means, to make money that we cannot possibly earn otherwise.
15. Eventually, it is all about our desires, wants, a false sense of superiority and a deep-seated wish to own the world, without having to do anything for it.

Now let us look at the likely impact, dishonesty creates

in a society and in a cumulative sense, damage it causes to the nation and the world.

1. It creates serious distortions in the distribution of wealth in a society.
2. It seriously undermines the concept of equality amongst people of all regions and classes.
3. It widens the gap between the rich and poor and this creates social anarchy, violence and increase in the incidence of crime.
4. It expands the circle of people given to several vices and bad habits. It is usually the hard earned money that is put to proper use. Wealth accumulated by dubious means, either wastes itself on its own or is used up for crass purposes.
5. Dishonesty leads to a widespread corruption and corrupt practices eat into the vitals of the organization and at the aggregate level, of the nation.
6. It is a scourge and its pernicious effects are as bad as that of a terrorist who holds the society to ransom and causes mass destruction. Take the example of the tendering system that is prevalent in our country, for construction of infrastructure projects like roads, flyover and bridges. The incidence of corruption will, inevitably lead to compromise in quality of these projects that are supposedly meant for public use. There have been a few incidents in some cities, where these important landmarks have crumbled prematurely, resulting in the death of several innocent people.
7. Dishonesty practiced on an extensive scale, creates a parallel economy which is extremely injurious to the health of nation's economy and its development.

8. Dishonesty and corrupt practices seriously undermine the reputation of the public and private institutions, and people lose their faith in the concept of governance.
9. Money and wealth becomes the be-all and end-all of all transactions and the finer values and mutual respect, become the biggest casualty. This therefore reflects on the national character and our image amongst the comity of nations.
10. People who indulge in dishonest practices and acquire wealth by dubious means, if exposed, suffer the ignominy of social ostracism and in that sense it influences the conduct and behaviour, indeed the social relationships.

We need to pause and reflect, whether a society should suffer and pay such a heavy price for the avarice and greed of some people, who inflict serious damage to the socio-economic fabric of a nation. Unfortunately, when this phenomenon assumes epidemic proportions, the entire polity becomes cynical and gets a sense of déjà vu. In this frame of mind, inevitable decline sets in, and the downward slide becomes inexorable and unstoppable. All like-minded people, indeed every citizen of a nation, need to pay attention to this problem and must play an active role in curbing this tendency, regardless of the person or organization involved.

Let us now look at another form of honesty, known as intellectual honesty, which has equally far reaching impact, on our organizational and national milieu.

Nature has created several entities, products, places and objects of wonders and has made this world such a beautiful place to live in. But above all, it has created human

intellect, an absolute marvel of such limitless potential and capabilities, that all other creations pale into insignificance. Human body has been designed to house, the physical and metaphysical, the gross and subtle and the visible and invisible features. The physical body is made up of five elements, namely earth, fire, air, water and ether, and on the death of the physical body, these elements are the only ones that remain visible, till the body is either cremated or buried, whereupon it gets dissolved and disappears. In a normal living human being, apart from these gross components, there exist other entities that are subtle in nature and hence not visible. They are primarily subject matter of perception, and are experienced by every living organism, including the human being. The Bhagwadgita describes them in their hierarchical order as follow:

Indriyani Pranyahu
Indriyebhye Param Mana
Mansastu Para Bhuddhi
Yo Buddhe Partastu Sa *Ch. 3, V. 42*

"Senses are subtle and are regarded as more powerful than the body that is gross. Mind, again a subtle entity is placed above the senses. Human intellect is also subtle and is stronger than mind, and above all is the Atma (the soul)".

Our contact with the external world and worldly objects is through our senses, which give us the experience of their existence and the feel. Senses are always outward bound. Usually, it is our mind that decides whether to pursue that object or not. But our mind is fragile and unstable. More often than not, we go for them because of multiple attractions present in the world, and our desire

to savour them, regardless of the fact whether that object is good for us or not. This is where, our intellect has to step in which happens, but only rarely. Most of the time, our intellect is not invited to advise or interfere, and we largely depend on our mind for action. Even when sometimes, in our lucid moments of awareness, our intellect steps in, the sense-mind combination is so strong that any intervention by it proves ineffectual. However, our intellect is invested with power of discrimination and should be used regularly for one's benefit. The soul of course, is non-interfering and absolutely indifferent to our thoughts and actions, and remains a mute witness to all phenomena.

Our intellect is the product and attribute of our brain, which is gross, and just a physical shell comprising network of nerves, veins and cognitive centers for several sense-perceptions. The main functions of our intellect, which is subtle are; to think, analyze, memorize, retrieve, discriminate and guide. These are all very superior functions and therefore place an equally important burden on it. The consequences of any slippage in its usage can to be disastrous. As mentioned earlier, our intellect is our most powerful ally, and nature's most benevolent gift to mankind. No other living organism in this universe has the benefit of nature's munificence, in such quality and abundance as the one available to humans.

In our normal behavioural transactions, mistakes committed by a child sometimes intentional, are usually forgotten and forgiven. An adult doing the same act would face major disapproval and a fully grown-up person shall never be forgiven. We have seen the impact of dishonesty and dishonest behaviour, and the widespread havoc it causes to the socio-economic fabric of our society. Intellectual dishonesty is bigger and more powerful in its impact, and

every sensible and right thinking person, would shudder at the thought and consequences of intellectual dishonesty. Plain dishonesty is gross, like stealing someone's money, resorting to corrupt means for making money, etc. and its effect is also gross. Those resorting to dishonest ways are exposed sooner or later and, suffer the ignominy of a sullied reputation, or else, are appropriately dealt with by the law of the land. Intellectual dishonesty on the other hand, is subtle and is indulged only in a subtle manner. Its impact however assumes a gross form, only if it is repeated over and over again. Quite often, by the time it is discovered, the damage has been done and there is no way it can be rectified. That perhaps is the reason (of late detection) that most of us indulge in this behaviour, fully convinced that it will not be discovered, and even if it is, the blame can always be passed on to all others except us.

Sadly such a powerful entity remains grossly underutilized. We have seen what all it can do. According to one study, a large majority in this world uses only 10-15 per cent of the intellectual assets and the rest is either unutilized, or is used in crass negative thoughts and behaviour. What a colossal waste of a powerhouse of positive energy!

Here we are mainly concerned with its use in a negative behaviour. Very often, people sitting in powerful position, like the Heads of States or heads of corporate organizations, responsible for the welfare of millions of people, keep many advisors. They are extremely busy people involved in protocol, matters of State and other inessential subjects, and have little time to address the issues that concern common people, the socio-economic health of the nation or of organization at a micro level. These are usually left to their advisors and consultants. There are several instances,

where such advisors, because of their personal interest, have tendered advice that are contrary to public interest and have caused irreparable damage. They present facts in such a way, as would lead to an action that is entirely against the interests of the society and suits only a handful of chosen people. This is intellectual dishonesty. If a person knows, or has reasons to believe in a particular way and yet advises or acts contrary to them, he indulges in an act of intellectual dishonesty. Hypocrisy, a behaviour in which a person pretends to have higher standards or beliefs than is the case, is also a form of intellectual dishonesty. Acts of dishonesty and intellectual dishonesty are committed for personal gains, both damage the polity in more ways than one and both these conditions must be unconditionally condemned.

13. Have the courage of your own convictions and live your life fearlessly.

Mediocrity and ambitiousness are the two major causes of sycophancy in both the public and corporate worlds. This is an extremely dangerous syndrome that not only, brings down the performance of an organization, it also clouds the vision of the policy makers, the decision makers and those sitting at the highest echelons of the corporate structure. The pyramid type structure of most organizations in the public or the private sector permits flow of information from bottom to top, while decisions are handed down from top to bottom. The middle rung also becomes very important. If any level in this ladder is weak in its integrity and does not have the guts to speak the truth, the organization is heading for doom. In one of the epics-Ramacharitmanas, Swami Tulsidas makes the following observations in Sundarkand in the 37th couplet:

Sachiv Baid Guru Teen Jon
Priye Bolah Hin Aas
Raj Dharam Tan Tini Kar
Hoe Baig Hin Naas

"In any polity, if a secretary, a teacher or a doctor habitually tenders advice, either with some expectation or out of fear, be sure of an early destruction of that polity".

Especially in a democratic set-up, if the advisors are dishonest, both intellectually and monetarily, the country cannot progress to its full potential. Ironically enough, while we are quick to condemn any kind of dishonesty relating to money matters and objects belonging to others, we seldom criticize the incidents of intellectual dishonesty that are rampant in our society. Human intellect is so fragile that it does not hesitate to tell a lie, a half lie and sometimes indulge in a blatant travesty of facts in self interest. Such actions are far more dangerous than stealing a few rupees and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Lack of courage of one's convictions and intellectual dishonesty, are more or less synonymous terms, and have their origin in selfish desires and a sense of fear. Let us first discuss the anatomy and the psychology of Fear.

Fear is one of the many primordial emotions present in all living beings since the beginning of civilization. Fear of death is of course the ultimate fear and all other fears are present at different rungs of the ladder, depending upon the perception of the person affected by them. In the early days, man was scared of absolute loneliness and natural disasters that use to occur frequently and, in the absence of any knowledge about such phenomena, he would get frightened. There were very few means of protection

against nature and wild animals, and he remained constantly under threat to his life. Survival continued to remain a major challenge till by his ingenuity and persistence, he managed to tame various forces that held a potential threat to him. This was also the period when several superstitions came to play a significant role in the lives of people, particularly about the events of which they had no knowledge or over which they had no control.

Sadly, some of these superstitions still persist. The sense and the extent of fear gradually started abating as science and technology progressed and human beings got greater control of natural events and managed to create several means of protection against nature, wild animals and man-made threats. In other words, the external factors that generated a sense of fear have been more or less accounted for and humanity is today much better prepared to handle these crises. It is however not possible to say that man has conquered all. Nature is far too powerful and some natural events of gigantic proportions can still play havoc with life over which man has no control. That is why it is extremely important to respect nature and not mindlessly exploit natural resources out of greed. The reference is to the issue of massive environmental degradation that we have caused to our planet and are still persisting in this ruthless endeavour regardless of impending disaster. Not content with polluting the earth, we have set our sights on the other planet of our solar system, which once conquered will perhaps face the same fate.

The psychology of fear in the modern context has of course taken a slightly different form. So far we have talked about the concept of fear at a macro level. It is equally important to talk about its psychology at a micro level, something that affects us on a regular and an immediate

basis. Fear is such a powerful negative emotion that not only it make us intellectually dishonest, it forces us to borrow the courage of others' convictions rather than our own, and renders us thoroughly dispirited. Fear enters our system because of the following reasons:

1. We have lied to others who are important to us.
2. We have committed a crime and there is fear of getting caught. If we do not get caught in a reasonable period of time after the detection of crime, this sense of fear starts declining.
3. We have fears for the safety and security of ourselves and our close ones in that order.
4. Fear of losing near and dear ones, or a precious possession.
5. Fear of our expectations and desires, not getting fulfilled.
6. Even after getting our desires fulfilled, the fear of losing them. We want to hang on to them for ever.
7. The fear of authority.
8. Fear of losing our good name and reputation, built over several years of hard work and service.
9. Fear of losing in any competitive situation, in a game, in sports, in a class-room test, etc.
10. Lastly, the fear of God, this though exists only semantically and does not normally deter people in doing what they want to do.

We at this point need to distinguish "desirable fears" from the "undesirable ones".

The list is only illustrative and there may be several other minor worries that will not qualify as fear.

Telling a lie or committing a crime, are obvious causes of fear, because they entail immediate and sometimes severe

punishment when caught. A lie does not have any basis for existence and sooner or later, it is exposed and depending on the damage it has caused, it normally invites censure or punishment. Unfortunately, in a society where crime detection and its prosecution are lax, the extent of fear is less and the incidence of crime is heavy. Expeditious disposal of crime cases not only engenders necessary and desirable fear, it is also an effective tool for controlling crime. Usually, criminals start with petty crimes and if not caught in the early days, get emboldened for more heinous ones. These are a few categories of fears that are desirable in any civilized society otherwise there would be a total chaos.

The fear of death is a syndrome which is all-pervading. It affects everyone, even the most intrepid amongst us, and has to be discounted as a common denominator. Nobody has escaped it yet and is not likely to ever do so in the future. In fact, in certain ways, it is desirable to leave this decrepit body after a period when it starts becoming an encumbrance rather than an aid. But however ramshackle we become, the desire to keep on living for ever never leaves us and hence we constantly fear the arrival of death. However the fact of its universality and certainty should help us come to terms with it.

The Bhagwadgita talks of a very profound and well-known truth in Chapter 2, verse 27:

Jatasya Hi Dhruvo Mritu
Dhruvam Janam Mritasya Cha
Tasmat Apariharthe
Na Tvam Shochitum Aharsi

"Death to those who are born is a certainty and those who die shall be born again. Nobody can do anything about this phenomenon. It is pointless therefore to either grieve or fear death".

In chapter 2, verse 22 Krishna completely simplifies the event of death in the following word:

Vansasi Jeernani Yatha Vihaye
Navani Grihnati Naroparani
Tatha Sharirani Vihaye Jeerna
Nyanyani Sanyati Navani Dehi

"Just as human beings discard worn out clothes and put on new ones, souls also discard old and decrepit bodies and enter new ones".

Death is a renewal, a renaissance and for the person dying a process of refurbishing his worn out physical assets and, indeed, nothing more. He does not die, nor does his Atma perish but only seeks renewal, like replacement of an old part. We in this world have unnecessarily romanticized the incident of death by our silly attachments to worldly objects and people. We cry, scream and exhibit such insane behaviour on the termination of ephemeral objects and beings as if there is no tomorrow.

Let us for a moment patiently analyze the anatomy of our sorrow, on the occasion of the death of near and dear ones. Firstly, let us see it from the point of view of the person dying. Taking the law of averages, death usually strikes at a ripe age unless some serious affliction hits a person. That person has lived his life and is usually over the hill and on the decline. His body functions have also started diminishing and it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for him to lead a full life. His death is also a certainty. All these factors are indeed conducive for him to make an honourable and dignified exit, without becoming too much of a burden on others. Is it not a great way to leave this world?

Now for those left behind, their turn would also come

in the fullness of time. They however choose to express their grief by shedding tears and showing insane behaviour in utter disregard of the condition of the departed. They perhaps cry for two reasons. They cry because they loved the dead person immensely and in his absence would feel deprived and lonely, or they wish to tell the world how sad they are at the departure of that noble soul. Both reasons smack of selfishness and must be quietly disapproved. Interestingly, that person over whom we grieve, has no perception of those who grieve. Crying over anyone's death therefore, is an exercise in utter futility.

There is an interesting anecdote about death in the Mahabharata. Yudhishtar, the eldest Pandav amongst the five brothers, was known to be a man of great wisdom. Just before he started his journey heavenwards at the time of death, he was asked a question. What according to him was the most fascinating aspect of human life on earth? Yudhishtar pondered over this question and then replied. The most important aspect of human life and behaviour on earth is, that while everyone around him is either dying or is sure to die, he believes that he is going to live for ever. The fact is that no one expects death to come to him and no one is ever prepared. When it does come to him at the appointed time, because come it shall for sure, he is caught completely off-guard leaving others to fight over his legacy.

There is an important lesson to be learnt. Let us not fear death but keep doing our jobs in accordance with our capabilities. Expect it to happen, prepare yourself for it so that you do not become the cause of strife and misery after you are gone.

The class of fear that is eminently undesirable and which we need to discard is of a completely different hue and

shape. It stems from our unfulfilled desires and unbridled greed for material acquisitions. This phenomenon is also a breeding ground of increasing intellectual dishonesty in all spheres of our interpersonal relationships. Most of our fears in day-to-day dealings are directly linked to our desires. We desperately want certain things to happen and there are invisible forces at work. The fear will keep haunting us till that thing happens in our favour. You want an-out-of turn promotion in your organization. Pending that, you will be careful not to displease your boss. In fact, you will do everything possible to please him including indulging in acts that smack of blatant intellectual dishonesty. Usually, the impact of fear would be much greater if the desire that one nurtures is either premature or unreasonable.

Even after acquiring the object of our desire, the fear factor lingers on. Now the problem is not its acquisition but a fear of the object being taken away. Again, the fear quotient would be bigger if that object has been acquired by unfair means or one is not actually deserving of it. The best policy is to remain perpetually sanguine, always cheerful and confident about the future and get out of the bondage of all forms of dualities. The conflict of extreme emotions swinging from one end to another like a pendulum can be very debilitating. It is best to remain in a state of Samta or what is described as a Samatva Bhav. If you get what you are waiting for without going overboard, you should be content. If you do not get it, even then you should be content. My experience is that what belongs to you will come to you sooner or later, and that which does not belong to you will elude you no matter how much you fret or fume over it. It actually never belonged to you. In this condition the fear psychosis of not getting something or losing it, will cease to torment you.

One of the serious mistakes that parents commit in bringing up their wards is to instill in them a desire not only to excel but be the best in whatever they do. The standard refrain in most households is to win and 'come first'. Now we all know that it may not be possible always. We do not realize the pressure it creates in the little minds and it is not always possible for him to live up to the expectations, particularly of his parents in all spheres of activity. He carries that guilt all his life and this cumulatively can develop into suicidal tendencies. The fear of 'coming second' or being relegated to a place way down the ladder can be debilitating.

I recall my own childhood. I was better than my siblings in studies but certainly not the best in the world. But the pressure created by my parents and relatives would make me utterly miserable, and on the day results were declared in school, I would wait for the announcement with bated breath. More often than not, I would be placed second or third leading to a prolonged phase of utter misery and depression. Thankfully, I learnt to reconcile with my limitations in later life and no longer experience any hurt or deprivation in the event of getting less than expected. Now there is also an intelligent realization that there are others in this world who indeed are, and can do, better than me. I am responsible only for my work and the results are in the hands of others. This is also consistent with the oft-repeated dictum of the Bhagwadgita not to ever get attached to the result of your actions.

Leave alone fear of losing, it is good to lose once in a while. Winning ceases to teach, makes you complacent, stops growth of any kind and in more cases than one, makes you arrogant. Our society, however, places a premium on winning and indeed glorifies it. Often, it happens that

both winner and the loser cry in front of the crowd, of course for different reasons. To be able to understand the worth of winning, it is important to lose once in a while or else you stagnate. Also, usually it is the loser who actually keeps moving ahead, puts in greater effort and if he persists with a positive approach comes out a winner. His success then is much sweeter.

There is an interesting anecdote from the tales of Shiva and Parvati, the manifestations of Purusha and Prakriti. Shiva by Himself is inactive, a dead body (Shava). In order to infuse life in this dead body, Parvati, the Prakriti, has to play with it, without merging into it. Parvati must necessarily keep Shiva in an awakened state and keep playing with it to keep the cycle of creation and destruction going. While playing, she also has to keep winning and losing. In fact, she has to keep winning more often than not, resulting in Shiva losing most of the time. The reference is to the game of dice, introduced to the couple by the celestial bard, Narada, and the wager is a hug. If Shiva wins, he gets to hug Parvati and assumes a state of Ardhanareeswara, the androgynous two-in-one form. If that happens, however exciting and beautiful it may seem, he reaches a state of complete inactivity which effectively means the end of the world. The cycle of creation and destruction, which in the context of cosmic phenomenon represents 'renewal', ceases to operate, definitely not a desirable outcome. Although losing perpetually causes immense anguish and humiliation to the supporters of Shiva, a supreme being, He continues to lose in the larger interest of maintenance of the universe in its current state.

This is how life should be led, losing and winning to ensure togetherness. This phenomenon creates several perspectives and is an important learning curve, allowing

us to lose gracefully and accept success with great humility. No one in this world has won all the time. In other words the best of people in their respective fields of excellence have also failed. Don Bradman, an all time great cricketer, got out on a duck in his last innings. Nearer home, Sachin Tendulkar again one of the greatest cricketers the world has known, has failed with the bat on more occasions than one.

Let us therefore completely banish the fear of losing and prepare ourselves for the next battle that is lurking around the corner. Here again, do not fear losing. You might end up serving a much larger purpose losing than winning, and at the same time continue to work harder and living well.

In conclusion, a person with no wants or desires has no worries. None of the fears described above bother him and he remains free of all bondages. A classic case, though extreme in nature, relates to Swami Vivekananda. When he left the shores of India to attend the Parliament of World religions in Chicago in 1893, he did not have a penny in his pocket. He did not carry a passport or any other proof of identification. He also did not carry any fear with him. Some of us may be familiar with the story that at the end of that conference, people of America were eating out of his hand. Such was the force of his magnetic personality, his oratorical skills and a complete absence of fear.

14. Simplicity is the hallmark of all great people. Let us consciously live our life in as simple a manner as possible.

The extent of what you can give to the society or the universe is inversely proportional to what you want for yourself. You keep more for yourself and that effectively leaves less

for others. You reduce your own intake and others can have an easy access to a bigger common pool.

Simplicity is the true and indeed, a necessary hallmark of greatness. All great people in the history lived a life of striking simplicity. If you wish to live a life of grandeur and splendour, and in an extravagant style, you may earn some points of fleeting name and fame, but you can never achieve greatness, defined and understood in a classic form.

One of the definitions of greatness in oxford dictionary is, 'much above average in ability, quality or importance'. None of these nouns refer to gross or material possessions. These denote the ability to perform karmas that are qualitatively superior in content and execution to what others can perform. All great people are in possession of a simple intellect, uncluttered by selfish thoughts or considerations, and openly demonstrate strong concern for humanity at large. They dress in a simple manner, eat simple food and have a childlike innocence about them.

Life should be lived in a very simple manner with least amount of baggage. We tend to load our body and mind with totally unnecessary thoughts of anger, jealousy and several desires many of those whose time has not come. These make the burden of living heavy and effectively prevent us from doing something useful for self and society. Here again the concept of karamyoga becomes eminently relevant. If we simply focus on our job without carrying the burden of rewards for our work, life would become very simple. We must also assiduously refrain from interfering in the karmas of others. This will ensure that we lead our life in a simple manner, and at the same time do not complicate it for those who come in contact with us.

Most of us live our life for seeking recognition from

others. We are worried about what others think of us and are constantly doing things that in our view would create positive impression on others. We fail to realize that everyone is running in this race and few if any, spare a thought for you or for your achievements however great they may be. In real world, what you have achieved and the position you have acquired is of little or no significance for others, except those who are close to you or are dependent on you. The rest of the world will at most, say a few meaningless words of praise or more likely, get jealous and pass a few negative remarks behind your back. Wasting your precious time and energy in such silly pursuits is thus completely avoidable. Interestingly, since everyone is engaged in this exercise, the whole thing turns out as a big farce.

Seeking recognition from others on our conduct, behaviour, achievements and karmas in general, makes us insecure and takes away our attention from our tasks that we must perform as part of our Dharma and nature. We tie ourselves in knots and become vulnerable for manipulation by others.

Let us learn to live our life on our own terms and live it in a simple and most uncomplicated way. We would then be in a position to work with a single minded devotion and improve our output manifold. This is an important mantra of lifestyle management.

15. All of us are essentially spiritual beings, and an integral part of the grand design of nature, God or some Supreme force that controls and operates this huge property called universe. Those fond of reading must set apart some time for the study of the spiritual texts. Even if you find it uninteresting in the beginning,

it will give you a peep into your real self and guide you on the path of righteousness.

Human body is structured in such a way that its own needs are innumerable in number. Fulfillment of one need raises many more, and they never get exhausted till the last breath. Our material aspirations, a strong desire for their fulfillment and body centricity clouds our vision of our real self. We reduce our own self to a mere body and forget that this is perishable and has an uncertain life span. In this process we forget and indeed, completely ignore that permanent being which is our true identity, our soul, which is pure, permanent and pristine. It is quintessentially, an integral part of that Supreme energy known as God.

Human beings are the highest creation of nature in terms of physical and intellectual endowments. They are surely, far superior to all other creations amongst the animate and inanimate. He must therefore, live his life in a manner different from, and superior to, other creations. He cannot be spending it only in fending for his own self, scrounging food and looking beautiful. He must search for his true identity, define his objectives and pursue them with single minded devotion. Some of us perhaps, possess that profound knowledge but our material needs and corresponding pressure is so overpowering that this knowledge gets covered, like the dust covering the mirror that has not been cleaned for many years, indeed many births. We are constantly staring into a pond that has been covered by dust and vegetation, rendering the clean water barely visible. We only need to calmly and carefully remove the dust and we see our clear reflection. If we make a conscious effort, we shall see a true picture and that will be the first step towards knowing our true self and our true goals.

Those of us, who are educated, engage in lots of reading

and studying for acquiring social status and for earning our livelihood. We start that right in the beginning of our life. Some part of that occupation must be apportioned to the scriptural reading, as well. It is again a matter of personal choice. Spiritual and scriptural study may not grant you instant wealth and power, but will certainly help you understand your true identity and purpose of life. Those who persevere in studying and following even part of that advice will witness a qualitative improvement in their mindset and indeed, their life.

Fulfillment of our material desires, or even the greatest achievement in the material space, can never assure permanent happiness or peace. This is not something that you can buy across the counter in a shop or a factory outlet. Spiritual path alone holds that promise, provided one perseveres in following it with faith and devotion. Spirituality will not exempt you from the impact of your karmas and their consequences, but it will certainly give you the strength to accept them and bear them with a smile. It may also not assure you permanent happiness because the constant performance of karmas will bring in some sorrow as well, but will definitely bring in lasting peace and contentment.

A word of warning must be mentioned. Spiritual pursuits and scriptural studies will not be very exciting to begin with. It will not be spicy like a mystery novel or a love story, which in any case you read once and throw into the archives. It will be bland, uninteresting and unexciting to start with, but your persistence and habitual reading of these authentic texts will engage you attention for long, and lead to generation of a positive outlook you would not have imagined. Try that and you will see the difference.

Krishna has this to say on this subject in verse 37 of

chapter 18:

Yat Tat Agre Vishamiv
Pariname Amritopamam
Tat Sukham Satvikam Proktam
Aatm Budhi Prasadjam

"Something, which in the beginning seems like poison is actually like nectar in substance and grants permanent happiness of a divine nature".

Knowledge gained by these studies shall have to be taken to next level, or it can degenerate into some kind of intellectual arrogance. Many a spiritual personages have been victims of this syndrome. Having acquired some knowledge in the field of spirituality, they flaunt it, misuse it and present it as an exclusive and esoteric knowledge that others can not access. The naïve amongst us fall an easy prey to their machinations and come to grief, thereby reaching a state of complete disillusionment. The scriptural studies and spiritual pursuits are not the exclusive domain of a select few who claim to have read a few texts, and pretend to be different from the normal householder and therefore superior to them. This happens because most of us regard that as a forbidden territory and do not even attempt to understand the basic concepts of spiritual existence. This ignorance is then exploited by some fly-by-night operators (Sadhus and holy men) who promise instant *Nirvana. They pretend to manage the affairs of God and indeed, promise to intercede on our behalf with Him for all our adverse situations and of course, for granting all our worldly wishes. The stringent caste system in our country has not helped matters and in fact has complicated it further. There are several instances, where lives of many good people, honestly wishing to pursue the spiritual path, have been ruined beyond redemption.*

It is extremely important for each one of us to engage oneself in the pursuit of spiritual studies, with respect to the faith or the religion one follows, and take control of one's spiritual destiny instead of appointing a spiritual manager. There is no substitute to realizing the truth for your self. There of course, is no harm in seeking some guidance, but your real self shall have to be discovered by your own self.

16. We perform karmas, through the instrumentality of thoughts speech and actions. None of these faculties should be used to hurt anybody.

Our karmas occupy a very prominent place in shaping our destiny and appointing our rightful place in society. Our image and reputation is primarily made by the kind of karmas we perform and the manner in which we perform them. Everything else in our life is incidental and peripheral to our existence. In view of their overweening importance, a legitimate question often crops up and that relates to the kind of karmas one should perform. There are two ways to approach this question. The first one would suggest that all of us, possessed as we are with a sense of discrimination, can tell right from wrong. As we evolved and became an integral part of society or a group of people, certain norms and conventions also evolved, and the concepts of right and wrong got established. While some norms of behaviour were specific to some societies on account of their cultural peculiarities, many came to be accepted as universally valid regardless of race or the geographical location. For instances, speaking the truth, non-violence, not hurting anybody, love and affection for all are traits and karmas that hold universal appeal, and are recognized and honoured as much in India as in the forests of Amazon.

The second yardstick of quality of karmas, take quintessentially a humane form and an interpersonal flavour. We should not perform any karma which does not meet our approval, if others were performing them. This in real life proves to be trifle tricky for most of us. We are quick to condemn others for their unbecoming conduct and defend our own which is equally unbecoming, in the same breath.

Let us consciously adopt a lifestyle, in which we take abundant care to make sure that we never hurt anybody, not even an ant or the smallest creation of nature. Every object created by nature, animate or inanimate has a purpose and let us not belittle it or dismiss it as insignificant. Intentional hurting is of course strictly forbidden and if hurt has been caused unintentionally, we must make amends for it and quickly apologize.

It is important to perform all our karmas with complete awareness. While our thoughts must remain pure and positive, every word we speak and every action we perform must be backed up by a thought. We make an extensive use of spoken words in our interpersonal relationship and these provide the first exposure to what is going inside our intellect. Our first impression to the outside world, apart from our general appearance is made by the words that we speak. Our acceptability in the society to begin with, and the impact we make is largely dependent on the words we utter. Let us therefore carefully weigh and choose our speech. It is prudent to speak as little as possible and think well before we speak. Compulsive talkers often get into serious trouble on account of the words spoken, simply because they indulge in excessive verbiage and there is no time for them to think before speaking, even if they mean no harm. Conversely, if we speak little, we can correct ourselves easily.

The most powerful muscle in human body is the tongue. It should be used sparingly.

It is better to keep your mouth shut and let others believe that you are dumb, rather than open it and prove them right.

All our actions including spoken words, must necessarily have some thought behind them. Let us not allow anything in which we are involved to take place accidentally, or perform any act on which we have no control. We would then move from a position of awareness to that of unawareness and that can have dangerous consequences. Unfortunately, most of our tasks are performed in the state of unawareness and we get into all kinds of troubles. Such acts tie us down, bind us and the same act has to be repeated, or some additional effort is required for its completion.

Remaining generally silent is a better option. Speak only if necessary, or required.

17. While modesty is regarded as a virtue, it is important not to claim ownership of any task or the result thereof. *'Naiv kinchit karomi iti'* (*I do not do anything*) is the mantra of humility and success.

Success or excellence should make us humble and not cynical or contemptuous towards others. If you have achieved something that others have not, be ready and willing to share it with others. Whatever we possess or have acquired must be held in trust for the general good, and its accessibility should not be denied to those desirous of using it. It is important to understand that whatever we have acquired or achieved is the result of the collective efforts of our intellect, nature and assistance from others in various forms. All these are given to us by an external

force and every one is equally entitled to it. In any case, everything that we have achieved becomes a subject of public domain, and it is pointless to claim an exclusive ownership for some short-term commercial gain.

Let us learn to perform all our karmas with complete detachment and indeed, remain fully detached from the rewards. That is the true definition of karamyogi. It is difficult to adopt this attitude, but its regular practice supported by appropriate mindset will grant us absolute freedom and great respect in society. Our ego is the biggest hurdle that does not allow us to disassociate ourselves from anything that concerns us, especially if it is something that earns us respect and recognition. The same ego however, is quick to disown anything that has the potential to bring bad name to us.

The Bhagwadgita makes a profound statement in this regard as follow:

Mayi Sarvani Karmani
Sanyasya Adyatmchetsa
Nirashi Nirmamo Bhutva
Yudhyasya Vigatjwara

Krishna asks Arjuna "Install your mind in Me and dedicate all your karmas to Me. Have no expectation or attachment to the rewards or the work, and fight your battles free of any anxieties".

Nothing that we do will ever go waste and each of our karmas will get appropriately rewarded. Performance of karmas will in fact, improve the quality of performance and hence, that of the reward. Accept that gracefully and this would lead to happiness and contentment. Nobody can deny you the rewards of your hard work, and in the same manner no one can prevent the impact of negative

karmas. Adoption of an attitude of equanimity will create much needed harmony in your life.

Perform you karmas in accordance with your Dharma, accept whatever you get with grace and move on to the next one. Do not gloat with pride or wallow in regret. There is so much more to be done in this short life. This is the best mantra of success with happiness.

18. One must consciously avoid blaming and criticizing others for one's problems and must definitely, refrain from doing it just for the sake of it.

Nothing in this world happens without a cause. There is in fact, a sequential relationship between cause and effect in all occurrences, and that is how this universe is closely bound and operates in a pre-ordained manner that can be scientifically predicted.

At a micro level, nothing that happens with us is also, not without a cause, and that cause lies within us and not outside or in any other being. Putting it differently, everything that happens to us is caused, either by our own karmas or is caused by a situation created by our karmas. We find it hard to accept the fact that our adversity is on account of our own actions, but in reality it cannot be otherwise. We have either done something overtly that bring in bad days, or we have created such conditions over a period of time that any other result would have been a complete impossibility.

Armed with this knowledge of the reality, we would be extremely slow and indeed, hesitant in putting the blame for our misfortune on others, something that we do so very often. There are two voices within each one of us that are contrary to one another and keep resounding,

constantly. One belongs to our consciousness, which is the voice of reason and is pure and just. The other voice is that of our ego which holds a strong bias in our favour and works purely on the basis of subjectivity. The voice of ego is loud and we deliberately lend our ears to it. This advice therefore, invariably wins the battle and we straightway put the blame for our misfortune on others. Our ego loses no time in tendering a profound advice to us that we can never do any wrong, and that 'wrong' is something only others do.

This 'profound' suggestion meets our approval most readily and we keep indulging constantly, in a blame game. In fact, everyone is doing just that and perhaps, that is how poetic justice gets delivered.

Speaking ill of others and criticizing them, is one of the most favourite occupations of many of us. In reality, when we criticize some one else for his negative trait, we actually see our own reflection in him and that perhaps make us feel good or less guilty. An honest person never criticizes others or calls them dishonest, while a dishonest person would not lose a moment in describing everyone, including the known honest ones, as dishonest.

One of the most important components of ideal lifestyle management is to consciously adopt an attitude, where you become the biggest critic of your own self, and leave others to look after themselves.

Sant Kabir, one of the most celebrated poets of the Bhakti movement in India had this to say:

Bura Jo Dekhan Main Chala
Bura Na Milya Koi
Jab Dil Dekhyo Apna
Mujse Bura Na Koi

"I consciously searched for an evil person, but could not find any. When I cast a glance on the self, I discovered there was none more evil than me".

How many of us have the courage to voice these words? We are all imperfect beings. The only one perfect is that one entity, known as God. He is perfect because He is said to be Nirgun, Nirakar, the one who has no attribute and no shape. Even the most enlightened and pure amongst us, are not free of some imperfections. While it is important to seek excellence and perfection in our respective field of work, it is sheer arrogance to assume, or believe that we have become perfect. Every field of activity has so much content and nuances that it is well-nigh impossible to acquire perfect knowledge of all of them in this short life. One person may know relatively more than the other, but that does not make him perfect.

There is this famous story about a hapless woman who was accused of adultery and the mob taking the law in their hands, decided to stone her to death. When a wise man intervened, and asked all those who were throwing stones at her to first check, whether anybody in the crowd was free from any blemish before casting stone at her, everyone dropped the stone.

The Bhagwadgita in Chapter 18, verse 40 has this to say:

Na Tadasti Prithivyam Va
Divi Deveshu Va Puna
Satvam Prakriti Jairmuktam
Yadebhi Syat Tribhirgune

"No one on this earth or in heaven, any god or human being is free of the three Gunas created by nature".

These three Gunas are satvik, rajsik and tamsik and correspond to the good, attached and evil. Prevalence of one over the other two makes our place in society. There is no one in this world who has not committed some evil act in his life, or has not entertained an evil thought at some stage. Everyone is possessed of these three traits in different degrees.

Let us stop throwing stones at others, give up criticizing and blaming others and instead, search within. An honest search would reveal several shortcomings and it would not hurt us to work on improving upon them.

19. A compassionate heart, good feeling for others and mercy for the entire nature's creation are all hallmarks of a good human being.

If you see a good person, you feel good. Sighting an evil person causes discomfort and repulsion in some cases, and you want to run away at the first opportunity. Goodness, an oft-repeated word is at the heart of all forms of lifestyle management. Like trust, goodness begets goodness. However in some cases, it may not, in the beginning, but if you persist, the most hardened evil-doer will soften towards you, and will at least, spare you his malevolence.

Goodness is a standalone and a self-sufficient attribute. If you are generally good, you would inevitably, possess several virtues that are commended by society. In fact, goodness in you will ensure that you attract many of them in the normal course, without trying too hard. That is the strength and power of goodness. However, one must add a few provisos. Goodness alone will not ensure power and wealth. Indeed, chances are that the genuine goodness in you will allow others to have an easy access to them, sometimes at your own cost. You will feel happy in the

happiness of others and do everything possible to ensure it. Of course, good person can be prosperous and these two conditions are not mutually exclusive. But more than that he is at peace with him self, does not hurt anybody and leads a contented life. In fact, if you have achieved goodness in the classic sense, you have effectively captured the 'mool-mantra' of lifestyle management.

At the end of the day however, it all depends upon the choices we make and the priorities we set for ourselves, in achieving our life's chosen goal.

Each one of nature's creation has a purpose, a role and we must take care not to underplay or undermine any of nature's progenies, animate or inanimate. Even an ant that is seen to be scurrying past us collecting food all the time performs a role. It helps in softening the hard soil and improving its fertility. We are the direct beneficiaries of her work in being able to increase our productivity. Next time when you go out for a walk, take care to step aside and not trample upon the poor little ant. However, if you do not, you will not be held criminally liable for it, but letting it live for another day will make you feel nice. A good lifestyle is really about feeling nice for little things that we do. For doing them, the State will not confer any award on you, but it will give you happiness internally, and that itself is its own award. Keep collecting little trophies by performing these small deeds, and soon it will become a habit that you would not want to give up.

Let us try to be merciful, forgiving and we shall discover that most of our physical problems that are psychosomatic in nature have disappeared. Little nagging pains, cramps in the body, stiffness in the neck and down to the spine will vanish far quicker in this mode than by the application of any external ointment. Just look at the nature's

benevolence and its merciful bounty in making our life so much more comfortable. It never chokes us on the supply of oxygen, it sends bountiful of rain and water when we need it desperately. Nature has also created enough material for all of us for our protection, and its judicious use. Why should we deprive others and choke them with our willful brazen acts?

Let us consciously, wish others well always and do everything possible to show that we mean to be their well-wishers. Have a big heart, it will smoothen the flow of blood through arteries and other blood vessels and indeed, make your life happy and long.

The Bhagwadgita in chapter 6, verse 40 places such people in a different league and it says:

Parth Naiveh Namutra
Vinash Tasya Vidhyate
Na Hi Kalyan Krit Kashchit
Durgatim Tat Gachati

Krishna tells Arjuna, "Those who are perennially engaged, in performing good deeds and in welfare of others, never suffer either in this birth or hereinafter".

There is an interesting story in Ramyana, the epic tale of Lord Ram whose wife Sita was been kidnapped by Ravana, the demon king of Sri Lanka. Lord Ram has to get to Sri Lanka with his army of monkey and bears, and they are in the process of building a bridge over the sea to get there. Amongst several workers, there is that little non-descript squirrel doing her bit in carrying small pebbles for the construction work. Lord Ram is deeply touched by her gesture and in His benediction, moves His hand over her as a blessing. That created a permanent mark

on her body from her head to tail and that has remained intact on the successive generations of squirrels. These marks have also made a squirrel look much more distinctive and beautiful than she ever was and the entire species of squirrel stands blessed.

All your good acts will be suitably rewarded and sometimes the reward would be of much greater value than the value of your act, especially when it is performed in a selfless manner.

20. Refrain from being judgmental about others and do not rush to form any opinion.

One of the major obstacles in forming a stable inter-personal relationship is our tendency to form quick opinion of others based upon inadequate and superficial assessment. We pass judgments on events and people at a speed much faster than the speed of our breathing. Surfeit of information that flows in the modern times through different media has made this tendency more facile. We show remarkable eagerness to believe that everyone else with the exclusion of the self has several imperfections and we lose no time in pronouncing others grossly inadequate. Any judgment that is not based upon personal knowledge or experience is inherently false and even our sense perception can often mislead us in arriving at correct assessment of a situation or the people involved. All transactional judgments must be made with patience, adequate caution and corroborated facts.

21. Indulgence in futile exercise, craving for attention and recognition must be strictly avoided.

In verse 17 of chapter 6, Krishna has used a phrase "Yukta Chestasya Karmasu", which means that one should put in that much effort in one's karmas as is strictly necessary

and not go overboard. We have heard of people who are workaholics. Oxford dictionary defines workaholic, "as a person who works very hard and finds it difficult to stop working". There is nothing wrong in working hard, indeed, that is eminently desirable to achieve something worthwhile, but to get into a state of compulsiveness where you become helpless and cannot stop yourself from working, proves counter-productive. Work overpowers you so much that you lose sight of your goals, and that affects your output adversely. In such a situation, much of the work that you perform becomes repetitive and wasteful. You are not able to see anything beyond your work, and the external factors that have a strong bearing on your work and its result, do not find any place in the overall scheme of things.

People may respect you for your hard work, but shall maintain good distance from you because of their perception of your futile occupation. Those working with, or for you will look for an opportunity to run away for the simple reason that you, under the burden of your compulsive work habits cease to be sensitive to others. We must realize that the principle of diminishing returns apply as much to the field of work, as to the principles of economics. Beyond a stage, all efforts put in with respect to various tasks, stop yielding commensurate results. Those who are unthinkingly immersed in their work are also seen to be weak in the area of time management. There has to be a judicious allocation of time to complete every task. Often several tasks are linked with one another sequentially or otherwise and the completion of one is essential for the commencement of another. One must take due care to assign proportionate time to different tasks, in order of their priority, value and importance.

There is an innate desire in all of us for attention,

approval, acceptance, admiration and applause, in that order. No body accepts dissent, disagreement or disapproval of his work and conduct, leave alone an open revolt which is condemned and punished with alacrity. In many cases, even constructive criticism is frowned upon especially, if the person being criticized carries a huge ego.

Exhibition of such traits and emotions are eminently avoidable. They damage us on two fronts. Firstly, they threaten to sour inter personal relationships and secondly, they disturb our focus on the job, leading to sub-optimal result. Seeking recognition for our work is a sign of weakness and insecurity, and spells lack of confidence in our ability to do our job properly. It is important to remain engaged in our work and perform it with the courage of our own convictions, rather than do it on that of others. One should not allow one's life to be held to ransom by the actions, and opinion of others.

22. It is essential to work on building our memory. It is advisable also to consciously create selective amnesia.

One of the most important and indeed, critical attributes of our intellect is memory. Our billion strong neurons have the capacity to store huge amount of information and brain is in a position to retrieve it, when required. Fresh and healthy neurons at a younger age, unencumbered by stray thoughts are quick to grasp any new information. As we grow and have to deal with multiple tasks and situations, the information flow increases and our neurons have to work extra hard to store and retrieve. There is a considerable amount of overlap that inhibits this process and we experience difficulty in remembering incidents that are routine in nature. However, if we apply ourselves and

develop a strong stake in preserving that memory, we often succeed in retaining it for subsequent usage. The classic example to which most of us can relate, pertains to the number of digits in phone numbers. Some fifty-sixty years ago when the process of our phone connect was through a dedicated telephone exchange, there were only 2-3 digits that were required to be remembered. Today, our mobile phone has 10 digits and we manage to remember all those numbers that we want to, or need to remember. My guess is that any increase in number of digits in future will not be an impediment in memorising that which we deem essential. An intelligent application of storage process and its repetitive usage helps to create a permanent and dependable memory.

Age has no relationship with the content and the quality of memory. The quality of our neurons or the memory cells does not deteriorate with age. There is thus no age-bar to learning, acquiring and retaining new knowledge.

In our life's journey spanning over several years, numerous events take place that impact our life in a variety of ways. All of us hope and wish that all these events will be pleasant and agreeable. However, this is not likely to happen.

As we move along, we want to forget the unpleasant ones and hang on to those that gave us happiness. This phenomenon also, may not happen easily. There is perhaps another way to look at this situation. Events that occur in our life create experiences of different kinds and we move on to the next one. Life is not meant to, and indeed, does not stop at one or a few, and multiple situations will inevitably yield different experiences. Important point that needs to be remembered is that, experiences are a process

of learning and not meant to create an excess baggage that we needlessly carry for the rest of our life.

Mention however must be made of two significant situations, with respect to which we must consciously create selective amnesia. Firstly, we must quickly forget any wrong done to us. Storing such incidents in our memory creates avoidable bitterness. Secondly, any good deed done by us must be conveniently forgotten and consigned to irretrievable archives of history. Both these situations are inimical to our long-term state of peace and well-being.

Chapter Ten

Excel and Evolve to the Next Level

Each one of us is structured, psychologically and physiologically to achieve excellence in a generic sense. Our station in life, our innate nature, our general propensities and opportunities that come to us, help us choose how we wish to live and select an appropriate vocation. Seeking excellence in the chosen field of our work is a life-long occupation and that must drive all our pursuits. Do not rest till you have reached excellence in the sphere of work that you have chosen. It presupposes proper diligence in making a selection of your calling and it should be agreeable to you nature and temperament. It is equally important that you select something that you enjoy doing. Work should not become a burden that has been forced upon you which makes you feel miserable all your life and creates a life-long regret. If you get to do what you enjoy doing, it reinvigorates you, does not tire you and promotes excellence.

It is also important to understand that all tasks chosen and performed in accordance with our innate nature will make a significant impact. No work should be abandoned because of some perceived imperfections or its lower estimation by others or society in general. Every task in

the material space will suffer from certain imperfections and that is no ground for jettisoning it.

Bhagwadgita in verse 48 of Chapter 18 makes the following statement:

Sahajam Karam Kaunteya
Sadosham Api Na Tyejyet
Sarvarambha Hi Doshen
Dhumen Agni Eev Avrita

"Do not abandon your chosen task even if it has few perceived blemishes. Even fire which is pure and purifies everything in this universe, gets clouded by smoke."

Let us go back to verse 48 and 50 of Chapter 2 of Bhagvadgita.

Yogasth Kuru Karmani
Sangam Tyaktva Dhananjaya
Sidhyasidhiyo Samo Bhutva
Samatavam Yog Uchayate

"Give up attachment and maintain equanimity in success and failure. Perform your duties as Yogi and you will reach "Samatava Bhav"."

Budhiyukt Jahatiha
Ubhe Sukrit Dushkrite
Tasmat Yogaya Yusajasva
Yog Karamsu Koshalam

"A person who creates complete balance in his intellectual pursuits does not get affected by good or sinful deeds and acquires excellence by staying in the state of "Samatva Bhav"."

It is also essential to introspect and ponder over our exact purpose in life. It cannot merely to be born, age,

work for earning a living, add to the burgeoning multitude of people crowding the planet, grow old and wither away. Human beings have evolved overtime and perhaps it took several millennia for us to assume this form structurally and intellectually. Of course several civilizations grew and perished on the way and this process will continue inexorably. Also at an individual level, the process of evolution and involution has impacted mankind in a continuous chain of events, some of which were cataclysmic in nature.

Anthropological evidence points to a series of evolutionary cycles that impacted mankind before human beings acquired the erect posture that we enjoy today. From an entity like a single cell such as amoeba to a trillion cell structure that all human beings are endowed with today, the entire human race has come a long way. Humans also seek their lineage from apes who went through a tumultuous processes of transmigration and acquired the present status. In other words, we have all evolved from apes. All apes had the genetic configuration and the wherewithal to move to the next level in the evolutionary ladder. But all of them did not. There are still perhaps billions of our kith and kin who are desperately trying to climb up and become humans. We know that many have not succeeded and are still trying.

Extending this analogy to human beings even those who have reached the top of the evolutionary ladder, the journey has not stopped. There still are several rungs in the ladder that need climbing till we reach the sky and beyond. Several icons like Ram, Krishna, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed, Buddha were essentially humans, who on the strength of their work and conduct acquired an aura which is associated with the Supreme beings. Each

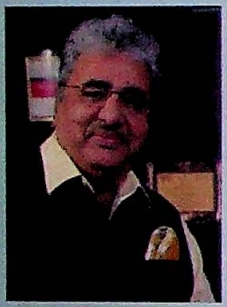
one of us has the potential, resources and means to reach that level. We need to create a will and pursue it with all the dedication and strength at our command. Once we resolve to exercise our free will, there will be nothing that can stop us.

The final mantra of a successful lifestyle management should run somewhat like this:

> *It is your life and you and you alone, have to manage it. Take it in your own hands; be the arbiter of your own destiny by performing good karmas at your own pace and style; Listen to the advice of others, but do whatever your inner voice commands you to do; Perform all your karmas, big or small with complete awareness; This will give you the reason and the strength to bear their consequences with a smile; Seek excellence in whatever field you choose for your self and success would follow; Consciously de-link rewards from your work and accept whatever comes you way with grace; Live every moment as if there is no more to follow; There really are no reason to be depressed and more than a million to smile; Live your life on your own terms.*

The debate whether Krishna or Arjuna are historical or mythological personages, will continue as long as the word Bhagwadgita is spoken. But this is pure semantics. What is more relevant is the context, vulnerabilities, lifestyle and the avowed goals of human existence. No other spiritual treatise (misinterpreted as purely religious by many) has dealt with this subject as comprehensively, as has Bhagwadgita. The breadth and the depth of Krishna's wisdom encapsulated in 700 verses has no parallel and is relevant for the entire mankind in a timeless paradigm.

This book is a humble attempt at simplifying the esoteric contents of Gita for a universal reference.



The musical intonation of mantras of Bhagwadgita, the song divine held great fascination for Vinod Malhotra in his childhood. This continued all through 38 years that he spent in the India Administrative service which he joined in the year 1971. Inspired by the profound wisdom of Krishna's advice and exhortations to Arjuna, he decided to write on different aspects of human endeavour, management of self, science and spirituality, concept of cosmic energy and mantras of leadership and ethics. He has published ten books, the latest being a coffee table book on Ramdarshan, a monument dedicated to Ram and his message to the world.